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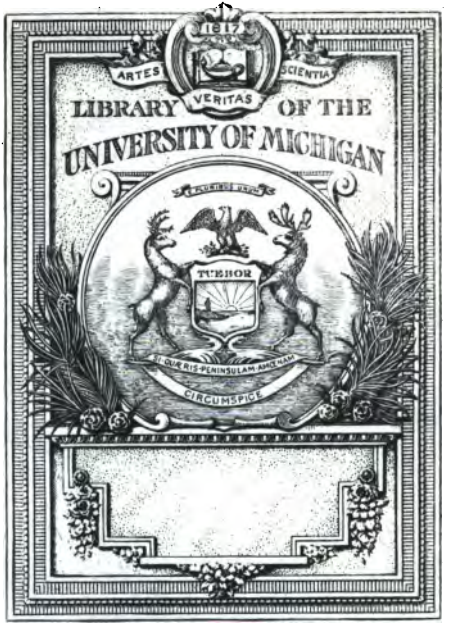

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MEMOIRS

OF

MARY,

A

NOVEL.

By Mrs. GUNNING.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. V.

THIRD EDITION.

LONDON:

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MEMOIRS

OF

MARY.

LETTER I.

Lady Auberry to Miſs Montague.

May 1, 17—

SYMPATHY, my deareſt, is the beſt friend of your old grand-mother; it ſpiritually unites me to thee, though our bodies are ſeparated by an awful diſtance:—Did not my jewel experience the influence of this divine impulſe, whilſt Lady Jane was unfolding the wonderful myſtery of our al-

tered condition? Yes, ſurely you muſt have felt that my ſoul hovered near its treaſure: with my mind's eye I ſaw thy every emotion, with my mind's ear I heard thy every complaint; thy ſoft white hands were ardently claſped together, but not in *ſelf*-commiſeration, not for our *common* calamity.—The ſmile that ſits like a glory upon thy countenance, was it not overcaſt with ſadneſs?—thoſe dear eyes which have darted love beams on my heart ſince they firſt opened upon the light of heaven, were they not dimmed, ſuffuſed in tears? I can bear it all, you cry, but what will become of my poor grand-mamma? Was I not with thee? Surely I was with thee, Mary; even now my ſoul is talking to you.—Invention or imagination has nothing to do with the buſineſs.—My pen and ink ſeem almoſt unneceſſary, ſo plainly does your image ſtand before me.

Lovely and beloved child, take comfort; let not ill founded fears for me eat out the heart of thoſe pleaſures which are ſtill within

in thy reach. Engaging, diſcreet, gentle, modeſt, and innocent—believe me, theſe are no ſmall endowments; the female who poſſeſſes them, cannot be called portionleſs.

Let us ſay to our misfortunes, You are ſomewhat troubleſome *now*, but we ſhall conquer you *hereafter*: this is giving them a handſome defiance, and treating with proper contempt the enemies who would cruſh us. The horrors of an evil-conſcience belong to our plunderers; we who are plundered have no right to think ourſelves unhappy;—in fact, the value of what we have loſt is ſuppoſitious, what we retain is of real eſtimation.—Theſe relations of yours are impoveriſhed rather than enriched by their booty; for a little more dirt, a little more traſh than belonged to them, they barter all that is their own, of conſcience, honour, and humanity: we will pity them, my child, for the madneſs of their haſty purchaſe, and we will alſo pity the miſerable

agents who have been made the inſtruments of their wicked devices.

They have robbed us of lands, of houſes, of money—nothing;—they have left us peace, rectitude, harmony—every thing: it is only the ſtamp of magnificence that is taken from our coin of happineſs; the bullion is ſtill our own, and with leſs alloy perhaps than if it were of worldly currency.

Your grand-mother has a thouſand bleſſings to balance againſt one diſappointment.—It is no ſmall figure in my ſum of benefits, that at the age of fourſcore I have none of thoſe drawbacks to the rational enjoyments of life, which are common to *many*, and from which *few* are exempted. My intellects are preſerved (God be praiſed!) to glorify the almighty giver and keeper of them. My other ſenſes are not yet fallen into decay,—I am neither blind nor deaf,—I have the uſe of all my limbs,—I have no bodily ailments, I eat well, I ſleep ſoundly, and what would a reaſonable being deſire more?

more?—Neither is it a little matter of triumph, when I proudly ſay to my heart, The *trials* of thy Mary have been *great*, but the *fortitude* of thy Mary is *greater*.

I have hitherto ſhut my eyes to poſſibilities, keeping them open to things only that were probable; amongſt the former was the loſs of your fortune, and nothing could be more apparently probable than the impoſſibility of its being taken from you.—I have been ſo totally governed by theſe erroneous ſuppoſitions, as to be wholly careleſs for the future; when I thought you rich, I ſhould have been aſhamed of economy, and held it a vice to ſpare from thoſe who ſtood in need of my aſſiſtance, to increaſe your wealth. I now ſee my fault, but hardly know how to be ſorry for it, becauſe it is better in my opinion to be poor by accident, than guilty by deſign.

I ſhall ſet about rectifying my omiſſion, it being now clearly my duty to ſave that portion of my jointure, which, before this event happened, I thought it my duty to

ſpend: theſe ſavings, together with the few valuables I can call my own, will be enough to ſatisfy the moderate wiſhes of my deareſt, and to give her independence, though it cannot reſtore her to affluence.

Covetous ſouls aſk for enough and a little more; we will be ſatisfied with enough, view our proſpects on all ſides, compute our hopes, our fears, our difficulties and our ſucceſſes, temporately wait for the ripeneſs of things, and patiently attend for better fortune; frivolous pleaſures ſhall not come into our plan of happineſs, but we will purſue after rational enjoyments, and hold on with conſtancy until we overtake them. Good night! I am going to bed, and ſhall certainly dream of my deareſt.

M. AUBERRY.

Another Word from the Editor.

Lady Jane Petworth's and Miſs Montague's anſwer to the foregoing letters are omitted.—An amiable reader will draw them

them to his own liking with the pencil of imagination; and one that is unamiable would have no pleaſure in peruſing them, becauſe they are made up of ſentiment, and have nothing of incident belonging to them; in other words, they were calculated to delight a Lady Auberry, but would not tickle the fancy of a Mrs. Oxburn.

LETTER II.

Sir Aſhton Montague to Mrs. Oxburn.

May 2, 17—

Dear Car.

I Have met with confounded ill-luck ſince I wrote to you yeſterday. I told you then I was ſetting out to take poſſeſſion of my new eſtates; but before I got to the end of my journey, my horſe, which never played me a trick ſince I firſt croſſed him, ſet off like the devil, and dragged me with one heel in my ſtirrup, half over a curſed cold dreary common, before my groom got up to diſentangle me;—my bones are beat to a jelly, one of my handſome legs is laid open to the knee, and I muſt ſtay where I am, in a damned dirty ſmoky hovel, for a fortnight at leaſt, perhaps longer. The moment I can be put into a carriage, I ſet

out

out for town, where I ſhall have better advice if I ſhould want it.—My preſent ſurgeon is a comfortable fellow, and tells me there is no danger.—I can bear bruiſing as well as any man, but I ſhould wince at the ſound of danger—I mean *doctors* danger; I am afraid of no other, come it in what ſhape it may.

Car. was you ever hippiſh? Do you know any thing about the vapours? I have an odd ſort of feeling, and can't make out what it is; no wonder, for I am confined to a bed, where none but a dwarf can lie ſtraight, in a room not ten feet ſquare, half my body ſwathed with poultices, half covered with plaſters, and fed on milk ſops like a baby. I do not let my ſurgeon ſtir from my ſide night or day; whilſt he is near me, I think I am ſafe. I find ſo little diverſion in hearing him talk of broken heads and compound fractures, that I ſhould be ſuffocated with *ennui*, if I did not contrive to ſleep away half my time: he forbids me from writing, but in that I chooſe to diſ-

obey his orders. I expect your pity, and would ask for your prayers, only that I believe they will be of no use to me.

The chief part of my business with you at present, dear Car. is not so much to complain of my bodily calamities, as those that hang on my mind, when I think what a deviliſh ſpell is come over Auberry, and how fatal the effects of his madneſs may be to us all.

You know I told you that I had not received a line from him for an age, nor have I written to him, but only by way of information, that our plans were completed, and his ſhackles knocked off.—Here was news, one would have thought, to make the deaf hear, and the dumb ſpeak; but ſtill he ſaid nothing.—Yeſterday I left Bath many hours before the poſt came in, and ordered one of my grooms to follow with my letters as ſoon as they were ſorted. He heard of my accident on the road, ſo ſtopped ſhort on his journey; but I was too ill to open any of the diſpatches he brought with him, notwithſtanding

withſtanding I ſaw by the direction, though execrably written, that one of them came from Auberry. I am too weak even now, though I have read it twenty times over, to make obſervations on the contents, but incloſe it for your inſpection; and when you have done the ſame, and wondered as much as I have wondered, by what devil he is poſſeſſed, go, if you love me, to his houſe, ſee what ails him, and *exerciſe* with all your charms till you have got the better of his evil ſpirit.

Your letters will be balm to my bruiſes, and comfort to my mind; do not be ſparing, now that I ſtand ſo much in need of them. Without any compliment, the ſeaſon of compliments between you and me is paſſed, or ought to be paſſed long ago; ſo in honeſt truth, I tell you, I have not another correſpondent ſo entertaining as your fair ſelf, which, if it will be any gratification to your vanity, you may ſuppoſe is the reaſon why I have lately kept my diſtance.—When I ſee you, I am only the ſlave of your

beauty; but when I read your letters, I am ten times more the captive of your wit.—You cannot be too particular in your accounts of Auberry; and I ſhould very much like to hear from your all-excelling pen, what the world are talking about, and if my *nameſake* has the honour of affording them a good deal of ſubject matter.—I thank you for the plan of removing all relationſhip, rather than claiming under the the plea of illegitimacy.—Prepared for both, we were ſure of ſucceeding in one; the laſt is beſt on every conſideration, and I give you more credit for being the inventor, than perhaps your lace-man or milliner would do if they were in a giving mood, and you had recommended them to ſome of their beſt cuſtomers. Did theſe troubleſome creatures get any of your laſt bank? I fear not; I will therefore ſend you another as ſoon as I am re-ſeated in my ſaddle, and can look round me.—*Theſe* ſort of communications between *us* muſt not be done in a *common* way, or I would not permit

mit you to wait a moment for any proof that it is in my power to lay at your feet, of that perfect attachment with which I am my dear elegant Car.'s moſt devoted

A. MONTAGUE.

LET-

LETTER III.

Lord Auberry to Sir Aſhton Montague, incloſed in the former.

April 30, 17——

I Am the prey of fever, of remorſe, of deſpair; my ſoul is the dungeon of torments; all the furies of damning retroſpection officiate as gaolers, and will not let one honeſt thought break through, to caſt a ray of light on the infernal abode. This is my preſent condition; what it may be hereafter—do you not tremble, Montague?

* What form is that ſo hateful to my ſight,
With eyes ſo dull, and cheeks of yellow hue!
It ſhrinks by day, and wanders in the night,
And ſips of nothing but the mizzly dew.

Why

* The above lines appeared in the Morning Herald, Feb. 9, 1791—a day, by particular circumſtances, for ever

Why lurks the monſter round about my head,
To ſteal that ſleep which pity would beſtow?
Why does the fiend thus haraſs me in bed,
And whiſper nothing but ſome tale of woe?

'Tis conſcience, child of horror and deſpair,
The ſting of man—the enemy of peace,
'Tis that which fills the mind with bitter fear,
And goads the heart, and bids its ſlumbers ceaſe.

Strange myſtery! that man, the coward ſlave,
Should ſink beneath its weight, and live but in the grave.

Do you not tremble, Montague?—Look on the wretch you have made; look on the ruins of my peace, the fragments of my reputation; hear the cries of my conſcience; ſee the pale ghoſt of my departed honour, and you muſt tremble!

You tell me I have gained a few paltry thouſands—How gained them?—By rob-

ever impreſſed on the author's memory.—The writer of them will not call it a miſapplication, that they are brought in to illuſtrate the feelings of Lord Auberry, though a *novel* character.

bery—

bery—and from whom?—Oh it ſignifies not from whom! Widows, orphans, all are fair game to the ſons of plunder.—Give them to my ſiſter—why aſk me the queſtion?—they are her's, your's, any body's.—Though, now I think of it, had you not better conſult Miſs Montague, and know how ſhe chooſes they ſhall be diſpoſed of? I have a great inclination to write to her on the ſubject.—I never will betray you, Sir Aſhton; yet I ſurely have a right, if I pleaſe, to confeſs *myſelf* a villain.—Oh! but am I not a *free* man, and may I not be the huſband of Mary? I think you tell me ſo; and ſhall I offer a villain to her acceptance, or would ſhe accept the hand of a villain? Oh! no, no, no, never, never! I ſee my error too late to ſave her, too late to ſave myſelf, too late for every thing but deſtruction, and that is fully eſtabliſhed—her's, mine, your's, every body's.

Talk to me no more of Mary and happineſs, I have turned my back on them for ever; I had rather face the mouth of a cannon,

cannon, than ſpeak to Miſs Montague; I had rather look on a baſiliſk, than contemplate thoſe charms that have undone me: I had rather the thunder of heaven cruſh me to atoms, than hear the tones of that voice which is of heaven's own tuning, crying out, Mary is the martyr of fraud, of perſecution, of Auberry!—What a frightful picture does my imagination at this moment conjure up; there are a thouſand devils in every trait of it. I will throw it on paper, let it make its way to *thy* heart as it has done to *mine*; and I will whiſper to thee what muſt be the conſequence,—confeſſion —reſtitution—repentance—amendment—pardon—and peace!

Mary is the ſubject of my tortured fancy; I have ſketched her on the mind's canvaſs in the true colouring of birth, riches, beauty, health, vivacity and candour—admired, beloved, adored.—This picture, which would have graced the cabinet of a prince, was deſtined to the fortunate Auberry. He loſt all his ſoul's wealth, by which alone he could

could have made this prize his own—at one ſtroke he loſt it;—and to make the jewel of little eſtimation to others, when he could no longer hope to obtain it for himſelf, he baſely holds up a counterfeit, without birth, without riches—a pariſh girl, and a beggar!—Oh God! I can go no further; finiſh the piece at your leiſure;—if there be guardian ſpirits that protect the innocent, Mary is ſafe; if there be avenging ones to puniſh the guilty, what will become of Montague and of Auberry.

LETTER IV.

The Ducheſs of Cleveland to Lady Auberry.

May 6, 17—

I Had once the pleaſure of writing to your ladyſhip on the propoſed alliance of our young people, but our correſpondence cloſed at that period; for when the affair broke off on our ſide of the queſtion, I was ſo heartily aſhamed of Lexington's folly, that I could not think of beginning it again on a ſubject which I do not now, nor ever ſhall, reflect upon with patience: the more I know of your grand-daughter, the more my ill-humour increaſes, that he does not deſerve to be ſo happy as he might have been.

In the preſent ſtate of affairs, it would be weakneſs to refrain from ſpeaking my ſentiments, being convinced from the tenor

of

of all your letters, that you are not a perſon to be offended at a well intended officiouſneſs.

What an abominable ſtory is this that has been fabricating to the diſadvantage of Miſs Montague!—will any body in their ſenſes believe it? and yet the plotters have got the eſtates, I find, and her money. This is a very ſerious part of the buſineſs; but let us once ſee the Duke enough recovered to have it explained to him, then it is not unlikely he will be able to ſet every thing right again, and force them to make reſtitution.

The intimacy that for ſo many years ſubſiſted between the Duke and Colonel Montague, does not make the idea at all improbable; on the contrary, it is extremely natural to ſuppoſe that he ſhould be able to give ſome certain information tantamount to the proofs ſtolen from your ladyſhip's cabinet.

As to the ſtory of her mean parentage, that is the moſt ridiculous of all ridiculous fables.

fables. Who will give it credit? none but a few of her own ſex, that find an *innocent* amuſement in degrading a friend or a ſiſter who ſtands in the way of their preferment. Neither beauty nor merit can ever ſhew itſelf in the world, without creating a great many foes; thoſe who have ſuperior good qualities, muſt lay them out of the world's way, or they will have them trampled upon; nay, I am perſuaded, if one were to make one's ſelf appear a fool, or inſignificant, or a dowdy, to engage the good will of our neighbours, they would not ſhew the approbation of our humility, for fear we might grow conceited of being good for nothing.

Notwithſtanding all theſe lets and hindrances we women love to throw in the way of each other, pray, madam, do not dream that there can be any thing very terrible in the fate of your grand-daughter. We *know* her birth; the Duke, I am ſure, will take care of her *fortune*; and when that fooliſh boy Lexington comes to his ſenſes, all muſt be well.—She is a little ſimpleton

on

on the matter at preſent, but as it ſeems at a diſtance, and his reformation by no means a certain thing, I let her alone till I have ſomething more to build upon than expectations or wiſhes.

She has behaved like an angel in this affair; ſhe is ſorry for the wickedneſs of her relations, but does not repine at the conſequences, ſo far as her own intereſt is concerned in them. Indeed, Lady Auberry, ſhe is a charming young creature, and thoſe who do not acknowledge it, and warmly ſupport her through this ſcandalous calumny, are no friends to innocence, and ſhall never again find my doors open to receive them, except where *certain* connections *force* me to let them in againſt my inclinations. —There are ſome of the former and ſome of the latter deſcription, who have given themſelves airs, and to whom I have made no ſecret of my determination: by this means I have already got rid of many diſagreeable hangers-on, once poſſeſſed of my better opinion; but I don't know how it

is, this wonderful child of yours has ſtrangely perverted my taſte; I look for her mildneſs, ſimplicity, tenderneſs, and purity in others; not always finding, I am often diſpleaſed.

I meant only to have made my compliments in a few lines; but have impertinently engroſſed ſo much of your ladyſhip's time, that, not to add to my fault, I have the honour to ſubſcribe myſelf

B. CLEVELAND.

LETTER V.

Mrs. Oxburn to Sir Aſhton Montague.

May 7, 17—

DEAR, dolorous Sir Knight of the *Common*, I grieve at the treachery of your naughty ſteed, and moſt heartily wiſh a certain gentleman, whoſe name I have the honour to bear, had been on the back of it rather than yourſelf. He never rides, poor man, with a groom; ſo nobody could have picked him up—Lord, how lucky it would have been!—Often does he friſk about, when he can get a horſe without paying for it, and I ſhall certainly borrow yours to ſet him upon it the firſt opportunity, making him take exactly the ſame road you did; and if the dear creature drags him to the purpoſe, inſtead of diſgracing him, I ſhall do as one of the Roman Emperors did, build

build him a temple, and cauſe all my ſlaves pay him divine honours.

You do well to flatter my literary talents, but you will do much better when you ſend me the bank.—I know I am fairer than a moor, and taller than a pigmy.—I can do without praiſes, but money I cannot do without.

I have executed your commiſſion, and was going to obey your commands, though I admire your modeſty in ſuppoſing I have nothing elſe to do but to go your errands and anſwer your queſtions.

I called upon Auberry before I had read your letter twice over; as to his that you ſent me, it is the mere rigmarole of a madman. —I believe he thinks the whole world a lottery, with only one prize in it; that prize is out of the wheel, and now all the reſt of us are blanks. The powers of that worſe than *Circe* are incredible! how did you eſcape them? I have aſked the queſtion a hundred times; but let it ſtand—it does your judgment a great deal of honour.—I am going

to talk to you about your friend—mine he ſhall never be as long as I live.

Two doctors carriages waited at the houſe; and not chooſing that my tyrant ſhould by any means hear of my charitable viſit, I drew the ſtring, got out of my chariot, walked into a ſhop oppoſite, bought ſome muſic, and waited there till the coaſt was clear: pray obſerve my caution, for I ſent away my carriage, and ordered it to wait for me in Bond Street.

Having made more purchaſes than I wanted, and ſeen the doctors move off in ſolemn parade, I aſked the ſhop-woman if the Pledells were returned from Bath; and ſhe not being able to tell me any thing about them, I ſaid I would ſtep acroſs the ſtreet to enquire of the houſekeeper, as I expected ſome little matters would be ſent to me from thence when they came to town.—She offered to knock at the door for me; but I refuſed, and announced my own approach by two gentle taps.

I ſhould hardly have known what to have ſaid,

ſaid, had any body but his own man let me in.—Prichard recollected me as your friend, and the civil acquaintance of his Lord; ſo you may be ſure I ſoon came to the bottom of all he could tell me: indeed he told me nothing that was worth hearing:—he ſaid his Lordſhip was very bad, light-headed, and often extremely furious; that the diſorder had been coming on for many weeks, and the doctors thought it would go hard with him.

Were the Ladies of his family informed of his Lordſhip's critical ſituation? I meekly aſked.

His Lordſhip's ſtrict commands were, that nobody ſhould write to acquaint them of his indiſpoſition, becauſe his mother was ill, and he would not have his ſiſter leave her on any account.

I hate to be ſo particular about a pack of nonſenſe; but you have ſuch a knack of gilding your nauſeous pills, that I cannot help ſwallowing them, though they were to choke me; and it is almoſt as bad as ſuf-

focation to talk about people one does not care two ſtraws for.

I thought, after all my trouble, I ſhould never have got at the ſight of Auberry.—Prichard made a thouſand excuſes why I could not be admitted to his chamber; but there is a maſter key that locks up all obſtructions, and unlocks all difficulties; I thought of your obliging implication, drew out my purſe, and gained admittance.

When we came to the door, he opened it gently, beckoning a female who was kneeling at the ſide of the ſick man's bed. It is my Lord's nurſe, ſaid Prichard; and whilſt your Ladyſhip ſtays, ſhe has no buſineſs here.

She was flying by me, and never ſhould I have thought of ſtopping her, if her face and figure had not excited my curioſity.—I caught hold of her gown,—there is no occaſion for ſo much ceremony, child, ſaid I, you muſt not go out; I ſhall ſpeak to you by and by.

The creature coloured like fire, gave me the

the moſt impertinent look you can imagine, and would have perſiſted in leaving the room if I had not turned the key and put it in my pocket.—I then looked round to ſee if there were any more doors by which ſhe might eſcape, and finding none, I drew back the curtain, expecting to ſee Auberry either tied down with ropes, or in a ſtrait waiſtcoat; but no ſuch thing, he was lying on his broad back, his cheeks the colour of red ſealing-wax, and ſnoring away with all the ſoft melody of a dozen Scotch bagpipes.

I could not for my life forbear laughing, which frightened poor Prichard, who begged I would not waken his Lord, for the doctor had given him a ſleeping potion, which he was happy to ſee was beginning to take effect.—One would think theſe ſort of ſleeping draughts are particularly efficacious to the houſe of Auberry, that they work alike upon fourſcore and twenty-ſix. Unwilling to interrupt its progreſs in the latter inſtance, I recloſed the curtain, and ſat down on a chair at the further end of

the ſick chamber, in ſpite of the efforts my officious attendant humbly made to conduct me out of it.

I invited my priſoner, by a motion of the hand, to come near me; but I do not think that the *ci-devant* Mary Montague ever looked at me with greater contempt, even when her mighty delicacy has been offended by my good humoured repartee, than did this nurſe-tending animal.

Perhaps you think there can be nothing in this detail to entertain or intereſt you: but pray conſider that a glow-worm will ſhine, though by the ſide of a hedge; and beauty, however coarſely attired, will make itſelf ſeen; ſurely, if I am at the trouble of pointing it out, you cannot do leſs than be amuſed.—Upon my life, Montague, it is terribly mortifying that I am forced to declare I have never in my own mirror, or in any circle, ſeen ſo much grace, dignity, and lovelineſs, as is monopolized by this little hand-maiden of Auberry's:—he muſt be mad indeed to think about the fallen Mary, having

having ſuch a face to contemplate as his beautiful *femme de chambre.* You never ſaw any thing half ſo handſome: if ſhe were in high life, we ſhould be all forced to hide our heads; never more would I go to a ball, or an aſſembly, where there was but a chance of meeting her. Rather than be thus eclipſed, I would learn to play at eighteen-penny quadrille, keep company with none but old cats, and paſs the reſt of my days like a mighty good ſort of a woman.

Finding I could not prevail on the pretty minx to come near me, I condeſcended to follow her.—What are you afraid of, child? ſaid I; you ſhall not ſhun me in this manner.—The deuce a word could I get from her.

I aſked Prichard if the girl was dumb.

She is no great talker, my Lady.

So it ſeems; but I ſuppoſe it is a part of her duty to *talk* to Lord Auberry, and to *divert* him occaſionally.—Pray who is ſhe?

My ſiſter, Madam, and a very modeſt young woman.

Well, but if ſhe is ever ſo modeſt, ſhe would not be hurt by ſhewing me her face! it is really pretty, and I want to examine it; be ſo good to bid her remove her handkerchief with which ſhe continues to hide it.

I almoſt wiſhed I had not made the propoſal, though it was inſtantly complied with: ſhe needed no importunity, nor did her brother ſeem inclined to uſe it;—the lightening of her eyes came forked upon us in every direction, flaſh ſucceeded flaſh ſo impetuouſly that I ſhould have been terrified, but that I fortified my courage by conſidering that ſhe was beneath my notice, and theſe airs put on to give herſelf conſequence.

Brother, ſaid ſhe, I ſhall inſiſt on your forcing the door, if *this Lady* refuſes to give up the key;—it is my *duty* to wait near the perſon of Lord Auberry, but I will not ſtay to be inſulted by any woman who comes *unaſked* to viſit my Lord in his *own* apartment.

Oh, it is ſo, creature! retorted I; then you

are

are here upon invitation! but don't be jealous, child, my viſit is merely a *charitable* one.

Open the door; I command you to open it; and ſhe actually ſtamped her foot with as much paſſion as if ſhe had a right to be angry at having her virtue ſuſpected. I delivered the key, bidding her go about her buſineſs; and added, you are really ſo pretty that I expect, when I ſee you again, it will be in a *chariot* or *vis-a-vis*—pity ſo much *dignity* ſhould be obliged to walk on foot.

She did not ſtay to anſwer me, and I flung myſelf into a chair, really wearied with her impertinence.

You may expect all this buſtle could not paſs near the ſleeping *Adonis* without diſturbing his repoſe; but you are to underſtand, though our motions and looks were vehement enough to have rouſed the dead, our voices were ſo moderate that his Lordſhip's repoſe ſuffered no interruption.

I reſolved to ſtay half an hour, and entered into converſation with Prichard about

his ſiſter. He ſeemed very ſorry ſhe had offended me, and gave me ſuch ſtrong aſſurances of her not being Lord Auberry's miſtreſs, that I could hardly diſbelieve, though I was determined not to believe him. I aſked how ſhe came ſo ſaucy; he ſaid, ſhe was a beauty, and had been ſpoiled in her bringing up, which accounted for her airs very rationally.

This eighth ſleeper appeared to have ſat in for his ſix months doſe; my half hour was out—I would not have ſtayed to pleaſe *you*, or his Majeſty, or his Majeſty's *eldeſt* ſon, though *times were*—But I hate ſtale recollection.—I was taking myſelf off, when I heard the man in the ſtraw tumbling about like a whale in the ocean, and then in a quick ſnuffling voice, he cried out, It will be found out! ſome miracle will diſcover it! What is the matter with you, my Lord? ſaid I, drawing nearer to him, and laying my hand on his——, it ſeemed as if I had touched fire; I pulled it back, and repeated my queſtion. Opening his ghaſtly

ghaſtly eyes, he fixed them on me with as little ſpirit of animation as he would have looked at his grandmother, pronounced the name of Mary three times as if he had been acting Chrononhotonthologos, groaned three times, and returned to his lullaby, without ceremony, *etiquette*, or good breeding.—And this is the evil ſpirit you expect that I am to *exorciſe*—it throws him into the fire and into the water, perhaps it may drag me after him; ſo do not think I will ever go near him again—not I indeed.

We had three balls this week, every one more charming than another—your name-ſake was not invited to one of them.—How delightful!—the flame was twinkling at firſt, but there are ſo *many* of us ready to bring in our hands full of *fewel*, that a great fire is produced which muſt burn that little impertinent prude out of the capital.

I am burſting with intelligence, but not another word till to-morrow—I go to night to the Ducheſs of Northington's—all the world are to be there.

Continuation.

My ideas are as thick as a wood, and I ſtand in the middle of them, without knowing whether it is beſt to go backwards or forwards: they are a noſegay of wild flowers, which having gathered, I ſhall not take the trouble to ſort; I preſent them in the groſs, and leave you to arrange them.

Miſs Lexington is going to be married; it is a declared thing!—and Maria treads cloſe on the heels of her ſiſter—better and better!—It ſeems odd enough that I ſhould feel any tranſports about the matter, yet in truth I am rejoiced, it is beyond all arithmetic to tell you how much.—They are charming girls, and after my own heart; but what care I for that? it would be no matter of grief to me if every charming girl in the world were to hang on the hedge till doomſday, or till their faces reſembled a drumhead; ſink or ſwim it would be all one to Car. except on the preſent occaſion, from which the moſt delightful conſequences are likely to happen.

Miſs

Miſs Lexington has made a conqueſt of Lord Selby, and Miſs Maria has danced herſelf into the very heart's core of the right honourable, ſmirking, ſimpering, ſkipping Earl of Silveſter.—I ſhould bluſh at your ſtupidity were you to aſk of what good theſe alliances will be in our affairs; —oh they will be of all the good in the world, by keeping mortification on the deteſtable enemy of my peace—yes, they will cover the head of Mary Montague with more diſgrace than all the reſt of our contrivances to diſgrace her.—I ſhall explain this matter to you preſently; in the mean time you are to obſerve, that though between ourſelves I do not take the pains to change old names, yet whenever I ſpeak of her to any other Lady, it is no longer Miſs Montague, it is Mary Wilſon. You have no notion how diligent I am in giving about, particularly amongſt the young men who have ever ſeemed to diſtinguiſh her by their notice, atteſted copies of old nurſe's dying declaration—her removal from this world

of ſin and wickedneſs was ſo apropos—that—but no matter—it is certain ſhe did not go a minute too ſoon—Her paper—what good would her paper have done if ſhe had lived to contradict it? but *now*, drawn up in all its proper *forms*, witneſſed by two military *gentlemen* of honour, *gentlemen* of credit—oh, it is of infinite uſe, it is worth a Jew's eye at leaſt! Merely to have baſtardiſed the poor thing, would have done her no great harm, her parents would ſtill have been people of faſhion, and we love pleaſure ſo well that it is quite the ton to ſupport it in all its conſequences; a thouſand people would have taken her up and cried, it was not the girl's fault—but to bring her in guilty of mean birth and poverty does the thing effectually, it is ſigning the death warrant of all her pretenſions,—what few diſſenting voices there are, muſt ſquall to pleaſe themſelves, nobody will care a farthing for what can be ſaid in her favour.

Lord, I have had ſuch a ſet-down in Groſvenor Square! I go there no more;—

the

the Ducheſs is one of the *bewitched*, ſhe has forbidden me to come there again;—with all my heart—I do not care two pins for her Grace. I ſhall tell you more about it by and by, now I muſt go back to the Lexingtons, and their ſpouſes elect.

It is a truth pretty well known to me, and to you, Montague, that theſe young lordlings *did* make propoſals ſomewhere elſe, and were rejected, after which they ceaſed to viſit the Clevelands; they placed their ill ſucceſs, at firſt, to a prior attachment for Auberry—afterward put it to the right account, her wiſh to engage the Duke's nephew; but ſince they have both *deſerted*, and we have let our cat out of the bag, theſe ſweet creatures are aſhamed, it ſeems, of their former advances. I have thought it worth my while to laugh at their excellent taſte; ſo w ether it is owing to my epigrammatic raillery, or the mortified pride of the ſiſters, who were forced to take up with her ſcraps,—the right honourables are now on the ſtool of repentance; they commiſſion

miſſion their Deſdemonas of the preſent hour, and call alſo on the aid of your friend Car. to contradict the thing altogether. Not contented with our beſt performances, they go about themſelves, declaring off tooth and nail, from the imputation of ever having encouraged the fallen lady to ſuppoſe they entertained a ſerious thought about her; even the letters that were written by them, to the old dowager grandmother, are all denied.—What can be more gratifying!—a new conqueſt is nothing to it.

All the world were, as I told you they would be, at the Ducheſs of Northington's laſt night, and only three deſerters from *our* cauſe: theſe were, Lady Elizabeth Jones, who always turns againſt the tide, run which way it will; Lady Elderton, a negative in the liſt of faſhion; and Lady Felton, who has no other merit than being the mother of two handſome young fellows. Mary was the ſubject: Lady Elizabeth roared like a bedlamite; called the reports baſe, ſcandalous, founded in treachery, and ſubſtantiated

ſtantiated in forgery: one of our *proofs* was put into her hands by Miſs Dawn, but ſhe tore it in a thouſand pieces, and ſtamped it under her feet. The Ducheſs of Northington, who is a mighty pleaſant creature, pretended to be her convert, and the ſtorm abated; I ſay pretended, for we have not two more *ſtaunch* partiſans than her Grace and Lady Araminta. Mary's other two advocates were ſoon put to ſilence by the Marchioneſs of Stairs, ſaying, ſhe was ſo well convinced of the deteſtable impoſture as never to viſit, or permit her daughters to viſit, any body where it was poſſible the mean creature might inſinuate herſelf a ſecond time; once was *enough* to have theſe ſort of good-morrows practiſed upon people of *diſtinction*. This addreſs was ſo plainly directed, that the two Ladies of ſubordinate quality, not chooſing to relinquiſh her acquaintance, recovered the fault, and behaved very decently for the remainder of the evening.

I have told you who were *again*;—as to who

who were *for* us, it is impoſſible to tell, except I ſend for her Grace's viſiting-book, and make my liſt of names ſo long that you would not have patience to go half through them.—The *beſt* ſpeakers amongſt *us* I will not paſs over, becauſe they ought to be diſtinguiſhed:—there were the Ducheſs of Northington, her daughter Lady Araminta Boyce, the Marchioneſs of Stairs, her two appendages Lady Bell and Lady Bridget Loughton; Lady Dawn, and the two Miſſes, who have not ſo much beauty, but more fluency than their mother. Lady Francis Lexington would ſpeak too occaſionally, ſhe is quite with us, and does ſome good when any body will liſten to her; ſhe declared Miſs Montague was never her favourite; ſhe never approved of taking her into the family; Mr. Andrew Solemn, ſhe ſaid, told her Francy long ago *what* would come out, and averred, that the young creature was no more the daughter of Lady Mary Pledell and Colonel Montague, than ſhe was his by the Queen of Sheba; the

poor

poor woman does not always know what ſhe is talking about, but this ſtory being ſupported by her two nieces, it is received as authentic. The Ducheſs of Cleveland is freezing cold to the Lexingtons, for the ſame reaſon that ſhe *cut* with me entirely, and I muſt tell you in this very place how it happened.

Two or three days ago I called in Groſvenor Square; I found them there looking red-hot angry, and her Grace in the pouts; you know how bitter ſhe can be, and that morning ſhe was as bitter as gall:—juſt as I came in at the door, I heard her ſay to them, I believe in the preſent race of young women, envy keeps no holiday, but is always in the wheel, and working upon their own deſtruction.

Popping in my unlucky phiz at that moment, I hoped the honey of my diſpoſition would ſweeten the acid of hers. "Bleſs me," ſaid I, "that is the prettieſt ſentiment, though I caught but the laſt words! will your Grace be ſo good to repeat it?"

I wiſh

I wiſh your Grace a good morning, ſaid Miſs Lexington; Maria got up and ſaid the ſame thing; the Ducheſs returned their formal courteſey with one more formal by half.—They went out of the room, whilſt I threw myſelf by her on the ſame ſofa where ſhe was ſitting.

They are gone away in a huff, ſaid ſhe; and if they had not been the *Duke's* relations, I ſhould have told them I did not deſire their return.—They are going to be married I find—the Lord have mercy on their huſbands!—if they manage ſo much in *other* people's families, what will they do in their own?

I thought ſhe might have been quarrelling with them, ſomething or other about theſe matches; ſo, to turn the converſation, began talking of her favourite, but was unlucky in my very firſt attempt to put her into good humour, becauſe, forſooth, I only ſaid, my couſin, Lady Auguſta Foy, wanted a governeſs for her children, and if Miſs Wilſon

Wilſon choſe to accept it, I would recommend her.

Had I ſpit in her face ſhe could not have reſented it more—out it all came—that the Lexingtons had committed a ſimilar offence to my own—her pale lean face was actually plumped out with paſſion—bouncing with the fury of an enraged lioneſs, ſhe called me impertinent, inſolent, put me in mind of *all* Miſs Montague's perfections and my *own* imperfections, both plentifully exaggerated, by much too humiliating was the compariſon for my repreſentation; ſo you muſt put that and that together, making it out as well as you can, in what ſort of flattering language I was informed that none but the friends of *Lady Auberry*'s grand-daughter would ever be conſidered as *friends* to the Ducheſs of Cleveland.

There was a great deal more *of* it, but I have no patience to make a regular biography. —The Lexingtons circulate *their* affront—*I* pocket *mine*.

Not a word have I to ſtick on the nib

of

of my pen, bad enough for the incredulity of *your* ſex: it vexes me to death that, except our *own* courſing party, none of the male creatures will be on *our* ſide, or believe a word that we will tell them;—you may as well hold your tongue as ſay ſhe is a coquette, or that ſhe paints white and red, though Lady Francis ſtands to it, ſo do the Lexingtons; and who, as they obſerve, can know better than themſelves, having lived with her in a family way ſo long?—Still theſe men are as ſtubborn as mules—nothing to her diſadvantage will go down:—had half ſo much ſcandal been blowing in the wind againſt poor Car. every one of them would have taken his little horſe and galloped away to meet it.

They are all alike, married men as well as bachelors.—Laſt night I overheard a mighty pretty ſcrap of *houſehold* diſcourſe, between Lord Dawn, my Lady, and one of their daughters;—her ladyſhip deſired his Lordſhip to invite ſome of the Royallies, who happened to be at her Grace of

Northington's, to her ball, Tueſday fortnight;—the howdy-dowdy peer did as ſhe directed him, returned to let her know the invitation was accepted, and aſked when ſhe meant to ſend out her cards?—To-morrow! was her anſwer. I am ſorry not to ſee Miſs Montague here to-night, ſaid the wiſe man of Gotham; I hope ſhe is not prevented by the Duke's being worſe.

Oh Lord, no papa! that is very far from the reaſon, you forget the diſgrace ſhe is fallen into.

I do not forget, child, how greatly that amiable girl has been injured, and heartily wiſh all thoſe who have wronged her were to ſwing together in a halter! (There's a wiſh for you, Montague—what pretty figures you and I ſhould make dancing an allemand between heaven and earth!) *You* intend (added he, to his wife) to ſend her a card, I hope?

Indeed I do not intend it, my Lord.

Then I vow to God, Madam, you have no ball, except Miſs Montague is invited.

Miſs

Miſs Dawn very properly deſired the ball, on *ſuch* terms, might be given up; they all ſparred a good deal longer—my Lady would not revoke—my Lord would not ſubmit—the Royallies were to be *diſinvited* this morning; and my hair-dreſſer, who alſo dreſſes her Ladyſhip, has informed me, ſhe is juſt gone out of town very much indiſpoſed, which I gueſs is to be the flying excuſe for putting off the ball.

I want you to get well of your bruiſes and come among us, as your credit about the fairneſs of things is rather in a tumbled down ſtate; *female* tilters will not ſupport it long, and it requires better props than thoſe on which we depend; we have the weight of the world on our ſhoulders, and nothing but the ſtrength of an Atlas can bear it up—it is only in the home department that I care for your aſſiſtance, the reſt I can manage without you; there is ſcarce a city or a town of note in the three kingdoms where I have not got my correſpondents to tell the people how wickedly the

amiable

amiable Sir Aſhton Montague has been cheated out of his eſtates, and how marvellouſly they are reſtored to him, as well as a ſpy to tell me the different opinions that are entertained about this wonderful recovery.

When I am writing to you, I never ſtop ſcribbling as long as my pen and my wits will run together; the firſt is worn out in your ſervice, the ſecond are ſtruck againſt the flats, and I have nothing more to ſay than that I pray with more devotion than I have ever prayed before, that you may be ſoon replaced on your ſaddle, able to look about you, and willing to ſend the dear bit of paper, ſo eſſential to the credit, pleaſure, and ſplendour of

Your's in a civil way,

CAR. OXBURN.

LETTER VI.

Miſs Montague to Lady Auberry.

May 8, 17—

THE Ducheſs, my deareſt grandmamma, is delighted with your charming letter *; ſhe calls you the firſt woman in the world; my heart fondly re-echoed the words, and repeats with rapture, Lady Aubérry is the firſt woman in the world; her Grace bids me ſay, ſhe ſhall frequently bring you in debt to her pen, that ſhe may be repaid with many more of ſuch eloquent compoſitions.

If I was not to tell you what ſhe ſays about my return to Riverſdale, ſtill you would know her anſwer is propitious, by the very force of that ſympathy, ſo beautifully

* This letter does not appear.

deſcribed as uniting us ſpiritually, though we are perſonally divided. She aſſures me, that as ſoon as the Duke is well enough to go to Bath, where the phyſicians are ſending him for the full re-eſtabliſhment of his health; ſhe will prevail on him to part with me for the time that it is thought neceſſary he ſhould continue there.—What a holiday for your Mary! never, never, would I be divided by my own conſent another hour from my beloved, oh, how tenderly beloved, parent!—Will you not endeavour to ſet aſide her Grace's intentions of having me with her next winter?—ſurely you will.—I love her and the Duke with all my heart, but I cannot, indeed I cannot, ever leave you again.—In vain the cruel world ſay I am not your granddaughter.—Nature contradicts them every moment, and happily for me her voice is the ſtrongeſt.

Lady Jane has promiſed to be my companion to Riverſdale—how joyful the meeting even in contemplation!—My imagination revels at the idea of it.

My dear Duke does not yet know the little creature he honours with his favour has loſt her conſequence, neither is he to hear of it till he leaves London; I wiſh he may be no more grieved than I am, and it will not diſturb a moment of his repoſe;—far different feelings ſhould I have encountered, had my union taken place with Mr. Lexington before theſe claims were made on my property; I can bear to be poor, but I am too proud to have ſupported the idea of faſtening my poverty and diſputed birth on a family, who are already intitled to ſo much of my gratitude; I thank God for having eſcaped that mortification; for, if I am called an impoſtor *now*, what ſhould I have been *then?*—It is very true indeed, that they ſay I am a deſigner, a plotter, an impoſtor:—you, who ſo well know that I do not deſerve thoſe epithets, will only ſmile as I do, that the world loſes ſo much of its time to ſo little purpoſe.

The Ducheſs tells me every thing that is ſaid of me, ſo does Lady Jane; they did

did not repoſe the ſame confidence in me at firſt, it was from the tendereſt conſideration for my peace this caution was obſerved; it is now removed; they ſee my ſpirit ſurvives my fortune, and neither of them any longer heſitate to treat me as a rational being.—What have I to complain of? I have loſt nothing.—All that I ever called my wealth is preſerved;—your love, your approbation, the friendſhip of Lady Jane, of Miſs Beauly, and what I leaſt of all expected, the favour—I will almoſt call it maternal protection of the Ducheſs.—How much has ſhe riſen in my eſtimation! What has humbled me in the opinion of others, ſeems to have exalted me in her's; ſhe has actually quarrelled with many of her old acquaintances, becauſe ſhe imagined I was ſlighted, perhaps inſulted by them.—My dear Lady Jane, who in every ſenſe of the word, is my ſecond parent, has alſo had ſome of the ſame buſineſs on her hands. Mrs. Toovey was out of town when this affair broke out—ſhe did not

return till yeſterday, when calling before eleven, which was too early for the Ducheſs, ſhe immediately poſted away to Lady Jane, and was let in.—Her ladyſhip gave us ſo laughable an account of this viſit, that I am tempted to repeat it, the conſequences of it, to herſelf, have been rather fatal, as the doors of both houſes are ordered to be ſhut againſt her in future.

I had juſt concluded a letter to my niece, ſaid this dear woman, when Mrs. Toovey was announced; ſhe flew to me with outſpread hands, looks ſo unſettled, ſo eager to ſpeak, ſo violent in her motions, that I wondered what ailed her, and would have aſked the queſtion, but ſhe gave me no time even to enquire how ſhe did; throwing her ſkinny perſon on a chair next to me:—"Lady Jane," ſaid ſhe, "did you ever hear of ſuch wicked, ſuch vile creatures? Well, to be ſure, it will kill my Lady Ducheſs — no wonder ſhe could not ſee me this morning—and then Mr. Lexington!

ington!—ſuch an eſcape!—that is charming!"

Who are you talking of, Mrs. Toovey?

"That abominable impoſtor, Miſs Montague.—Well, to be ſure, Lady Auberry and ſhe are neither worſe than the other. Well, and how did it all come to light?—and ſo the girl I hope is to be ſent back—charming!—and my Lady Ducheſs and my Lord Duke——Oh, my dear grandmamma, if I ever ſaw Mr. Lexington, I have ſeen him enter the houſe this moment.

LETTER VII.

Lady Jane Petworth to Lady Auberry.

In continuation.

May 9, 17—

IT is pity ſo ſweet a tranſcript of your Mary's heart ſhould be toſſed aſide, or diſpatched to your ladyſhip in its preſent unfiniſhed ſtate, I will therefore adopt myſelf her amanuenſis, and try to do her works the credit they deſerve: it is a hard taſk to do that; but what may not a willing painter, tranſported with her ſubject, be able to perform?

I have much to tell you, but nothing terrible to relate; perhaps amongſt the materials with which I am furniſhed, you may light on ſome that will force you to ſmile, others weep, but not a tear ſhall moiſten your

your eyes from the beginning to the end of my letter, that cannot make out its hereditary claim to happineſs. Have I ſaid enough to make you underſtand, that your granddaughter is quite as well, and as happy, as when ſhe ſat down to entertain you, though not half ſo much to the purpoſe as I ſhall do.

Ah! dear grandmamma, if I ever ſaw Mr. Lexington, I have ſeen him enter the houſe this moment.—Why could ſhe not have told you, that ſhe had ſeen Lady Jane Petworth at the ſame time?—for I happened to be holding by his arm, and we entered the houſe together.—I ſent him to the Ducheſs's bedſide to make his peace, if he could, with her, as he had before done with me; and I returned into the breakfaſt parlour, where I had caught a glimpſe of Miſs Montague, as ſhe ſat at her writing table before a window;—the pen had fallen from her hand, and I found her altogether in a ſtate of amazement. "Good God," ſhe cried, "how glad I am that you

are come!—did Mr. Lexington paſs you at the door?"—Lexington did not paſs me, my dear, for we came in at the ſame inſtant. "Then it is he indeed, but what brings him back?—Where did you firſt ſee him?"—The ſweet fluttered creature almoſt panted for breath as ſhe aſked theſe queſtions.

I ſaw him at my own houſe, Mary, and at eight o'clock this morning.—"Eight o'clock!"—repeated ſhe, a cherub winged bluſh that flew acroſs her fair cheeks, proclaimed her ſurpriſe at his making me ſo early a viſit.

Not to increaſe her palpitations, I took no notice of them, but began telling her how extremely I had been aſtoniſhed by his unexpected appearance—he came before I had half my clothes on; my footman, who let him up, has been with me but two days, and did not know him, nor would he give in his name. I was only informed, a gentleman, who ſeemed very impatient to ſee me, waited below.—I hurried down as faſt

as

as I could, but ſtarted when I ſaw Lexington ſtand on the firſt ſtair to meet me.—Entirely occupied by his recent unworthy conduct, I threw a great deal of reſerve into his reception.—"Oh! good God," cried he, "is this Lady Jane Petworth, who receives me with leſs cordiality than ſhe would receive a ſtranger?"

I feel no change in my ſentiments for you, Sir, ſince we laſt parted in Groſvenor Square.

Well, ſay no more of that, ſay no more of that, in a quick hurrying tone—what is paſſed cannot be recalled—but tell me I conjure you, have I the murder of my uncle to attone for, or does he ſtill live?

I had, till now, averted my eyes from him; I looked towards him, as he mentioned his uncle,—there was in his voice a ſomething irreſiſtably attractive, and I perfectly ſcreamed with horror when I ſaw the change in his countenance.—"And is he much changed indeed?" aſked your ſweet Mary, with a ſuppreſſed ſigh.—Very much,

my dear,—he is pale, thin, dejected; he looks ten years older than when he went on his quick-failing expedition to the continent.—"I am ſorry for it," ſhe replied, "the Duke and Ducheſs will grieve ſadly at the alteration." Oh, but we ſhall ſet him up again now we have him amongſt us,—Are you a good nurſe, Mary? "Why does your ladyſhip enquire, I hope you do not expect that I ſhall offer myſelf as a nurſe to Mr. Lexington?"—Somebody belonging to our little friendly circle muſt take the office upon them, or he will never get the better of his conſumptive habit;—he looks like a ghoſt—his hair is rioting round his pale face as if he did not care what became of him, and he has not been in a bed for the laſt five nights.—She ſmiled—"You are very whimſical in your deſcription; I am ſure he had nothing *conſumptive* in his figure when I ſaw him from the window."—So, ſo, Miſs Montague, theſe are infidel notions—I ſhall not ſhut up my bowels of compaſſion, if you are ſo hard-hearted;

hearted; I must believe him in a decline, and I must believe that he will die, if some very great turn does not happen in his favour.—"Dear Lady Jane, I know you are jesting, but why will you—I mean, why did he do so heedless a thing?" I understand your meaning, my dear, extremely well, and shall tell you—why he imprudently travelled so many nights without refreshment. She found herself a little embarrassed, and was glad to let me go on in my own way.

He did not hear of the Duke's seizure from Lord Francis, when his lordship came up with him at Paris, where he waited his arrival; they proceeded a considerable length on their way to Naples, when some letters he got from this side of the water spoke of the Duke's situation as a matter of which he must have been long ago fully informed. He applied to Lord Francis for further intelligence, who owned his Grace had been in danger, but that when he left Britain, he was in the fairest way of recovery,

recovery, for which reaſon he forebore the ſubject, fearing it might make a diſagreeable impreſſion on his ſpirits, and caſt a gloom over the pleaſures of their future excurſion.—The young man, who believed his own refractory conduct the oſtenſible cauſe of the Duke's illneſs was not to be appeaſed by the ſolemn aſſeverations of Lord Francis, that all danger was finally at an end; neither did he expreſs himſelf very much obliged to his lordſhip for having kept him ſo long in the dark. Having reſolved to come home and fall at the feet of one uncle, very much to the diſſatisfaction of the other, they parted not the beſt friends in the world—Lord Francis refuſed to turn back with him, but continued his ſolitary tour towards Naples, whilſt poor Lexington, on the wings of duty, or ſome other wings equally well conſtructed for ſwiftneſs, flew acroſs the Continent, and two hours ago alighted at my door.—Having talked a long time together, and very much to the purpoſe—he being impatient

to

to come hither—I not expecting my carriage so soon as he wished, and the morning being a brilliant one, I consented to promenade it with only his arm to assist me.—Here I stopped, considering what I should next say to entertain my attentive, but silent companion—however, she prevented my studies, by saying in a low voice, "My dearest Lady Jane, I have a favour to request, and you must not refuse me."—I shook my head—It will not do Mary.—"What, before I have told you."—Your resentful eyes have declared that you want to hide yourself from Lexington.—"Ah, do not call it hiding, because I determine not to throw himself in his way; if I stay here can I avoid meeting him?—Let me, I beseech you, in the name of Lady Auberry I beseech you, let me go this moment to Bruton Street and wait your return; or when he is gone, send for me, and I will come back immediately."

Make yourself quite easy, child, I will draw you into no dilemma—I will place you in

in no diſagreeable ſituation."—She had riſen from her chair, and I had taken hold of her hand to prevent a premeditated elopement, when the Ducheſs's woman came in with her Grace's compliments, and a requeſt that we would both ſtep into her apartment.—"I cannot go, indeed I cannot go," ſaid the ſtruggling dear, buffeting in the toils of her own affrighted fancy.—I aſked Mrs. Brudſell if any company was with the Ducheſs. Nobody was with her *now*, ſhe ſaid.—Where is Mr. Lexington? was my ſecond queſtion. He had juſt left her Grace—ſhe believed was gone home, as ſhe heard his aunt ſay to him as ſhe came into the room, and he was going out—Let me hear of no excuſes, but go to bed immediately.

Thank God, cried Mary, and ſlipping her arm through mine, we paſſed into the dreſſing room, and from thence to the bed-chamber. The Ducheſs looked well pleaſed, and was in good ſpirits;—ſhe aſked Miſs Montague if ſhe had ſeen the Duke—how he had

had reſted—if we thought he would be able to move ſoon—that ſhe longed to give Lady Auberry the pleaſure of ſeeing her granddaughter. In ſhort, I never heard her talk ſo much on ſo many ſubjects at one time; but in all her converſation ſhe did not once mention the name of Lexington, and your lovely Mary very ſpeedily recovered her uſual compoſure, if not her uſual vivacity—The ſurpriſe of the morning had left a degree of languor on her countenance.—The Ducheſs obſerved it—ſaid ſhe would kill herſelf with ſo much confinement, and begged I would take her out for two or three hours—I have ordered the chariot to be ready in twenty minutes, —do not trouble your heads about the Duke, I ſhall go and ſit with him in the mean time—ſhe began to get up as ſoon as we came into the room, and was ready to leave her apartment before our carriage came up to the door.—Take a long drive, ſaid ſhe, I ſhall not expect to ſee you again till you have gone a dozen miles at leaſt.

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—When you return, come to me, I ſhall be with the Duke, and I expect you are to tell me I have done my duty in your abſence.

The rout we were to take was left to my direction, and I gave the preference to Richmond, thinking a walk as well as a drive would do us good, the Duke having delightful gardens belonging to his villa, but I afterwards repented of my choice, when I ſaw, notwithſtanding all her pretty arts to conceal it, that reflecting on paſſed ſcenes embittered the preſent moment.—I might have thought of this before, and how natural it was that her ſpirits ſhould be affected, this being the firſt time of her making an excurſion to Richmond, without having Henry of the party.—When we came to the green-houſe, an old gardener, who has lived in the family thirty years, and had employed himſelf ſince we firſt made our appearance in pulling flowers for us to carry to town, ſaid, when he preſented them to your granddaughter, "theſe

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are not so fine as *some* that your ladyship have seen of my raising; heretofore I would challenge all the gardeners in England for a grander shew than those my Lady Duchess and your ladyship came and fetched away from here before the masquerade—the young squire was with you too, as I well remember, for he not only helped to do my work, but gave me half a guinea: I hope his honour is well?"

Oh, very well, said I, and I dare say it is not the last half guinea you will have of his money, honest Richard.—"God bless the whole family," cried Richard, "there is not such a root and branch to be met with again upon the face of the earth."

Perhaps you may wonder why I was so impertinent to answer for Miss Montague, when both the speech and the question were directed to her.—The truth is, she could not answer for herself, and if nobody had taken notice of his *gallantry*, poor Richard would have been sorely disappointed.—Her thoughtfulness vanished as soon as we were

were reſeated in the carriage, though it was with difficulty we got into it.—What a perfect bower had the old man made of our vehicle, ſide and front pockets were ſtuffed with bundles of flowers, whoſe ſcented heads reached to the very tops of the glaſſes, beſides having our laps filled after we had ſcrambled our way through all obſtructions, with the choiceſt of all that was choice, in the eſtimation of Richard.

Continuation.

MY pacquet to your ladyſhip will be ſo voluminous, that I muſt break it off and patch it together again, by fits and ſtarts, as occaſion offers.— I tell you this, that in future you may not expect my exits or entrances are to be attended with any ſort of ceremony.

What company are there with the Duke and Ducheſs, ſaid Mary, as we paſſed through the hall.—" Nobody at preſent, madam," replied the porter, " I let Mr. Lexing-

Lexington out about ten minutes ago."—How good—how conſiderate!—whiſpered ſhe, gently ſqueezing my hand as we went forward to the inner appartments, they will not humble me I perceive, I ſhall be permitted to go to Riverſdale without the *mortification* of an interview. A little anger I thought was mixed with the obſervation; but perhaps I was miſtaken. As I opened the laſt door, I could diſtinguiſh the voice of her Grace, and heard her ſay, leave that to me, it will finiſh our *petit* romance moſt pleaſantly.—She ſaid no more, having turned round and ſeen that we were at her elbow. Our reception was more than gracious; it was characteriſed by every ſpecies of kindneſs; they both ſaluted your granddaughter;—the Duke told her with a gay air, that though ſhe was the beſt nurſe in the world, he would not give her the *whole* credit of his reſtoration, but that ſhe muſt be contented to divide it with Lexington, whoſe return to his reaſon and his family, had completed the cure her care had forwarded.

warded. "Let Mr. Lexington have the whole merit," ſhe replied, "I cannot conſent to divide any ſort of credit with Mr. Lexington, but the joy I feel at ſeeing your Grace ſo much better to day, ſhall be *all* my own."—She kiſſed his hand—there was fervency in the action, and her eyes did not want ſpirit I'll aſſure you.—The Duchefs looked at me and ſmiled.—I believe ſhe ſaw I underſtood her meaning, for ſhe aſked me directly if I had ever ſeen ſo marvellous a reſurrection as Henry's preſence had produced on his uncle, but do you know, added ſhe in the ſame breath, that the weather-cock is in love again. If with the Duke's approbation and your own, I ſee no harm in that, ſaid I.—Miſs Montague got up—ſhe would go and have ſome powder thrown in her hair, the drive and the walk had taken it all out. Whatever refreſhment her hair wanted, her cheeks did not ſtand in need of any.—The Duchefs made her return to her ſeat, and bid her ſit ſtill, for ſhe had never ſeen her look

more

more to the purpoſe—the Duke and I want to talk to you about this fooliſh boy of ours, who, as I was telling Lady Jane, has taken it into his head to be as deſperately in love as he has ever been with *you* —" Pray let me go, pray let me go," replied the agitated charmer, " there can be no neceſſity for my entering into the affairs of Mr. Lexington."—This is perfectly *miſſiſh*, it will do you no harm to hear what the Duke has to ſay. I need not tell you who made this ſpeech. " Indeed," cried his Grace, tenderly taking her hand in his, and obliging her to be reſeated, " more of my nephew's happineſs depends upon *you* than you ſeem to imagine; he has uſed you, my dear child, ſo exceedingly ill, that without *your* approbation, he cannot hope that his aunt or I will conſent to his preſent election."—She claſped her lovely hands together,—" Oh! then do not withhold it a moment, for he has my full, my entire approbation." The Duke caught her in his arms, " Thank you my beſt love,"

love," ſaid he.—"Thank you, my dear," repeated her Grace, "you are a good child *now*, and I love you better than ever."—"And *has* ſhe forgiven me? has ſhe opened to me *once* more the view to all earthly felicity?" cried Lexington—(he had entered at the door while ſhe was ſpeaking, obſerved only by myſelf)—"Say again that I have your full, your entire approbation, deareſt admirable Mary!"

Does your ladyſhip begin to comprehend how this ſcene is to end?—No—you can have no idea of its concluſion, except you are really inſpired. He did not fall at her feet, but ſtood before her in an attitude that beggars deſcription; there was *ſoul* in his poſition—it conveyed every ſenſe of rhetorick—the omiſſions in his dreſs were rectified—no traces of fatigue or ſpiritleſs ſuſpence daſhed with *ſombre* hue the brilliant outlines of a contented mind—But what you aſk became of your devoted granddaughter in this terrible *rencontre*.—I muſt have left you in the dark as to her thoughts, and her wiſhes,

if the language of her face was not ſo comprehenſive that a mere bungler might find it out. It is the ſhort-hand of her mind, and crowds a great deal into a little ſpace. The ſtrokes of ſilent expreſſion are maſterly, and one eaſily collects the image and proportion of what they reſemble. To ſee the *ſoul* flaſhing in the face as *hers* did, whilſt Henry ſtood expecting his final ſentence from her lips, would, one might think, have converted an atheiſt.—It was not ſurpriſe, joy, love, diſtruſt, pity, or reſentment, with which ſhe beheld him, but a combination of the whole. "I am grateful," ſaid ſhe in a voice of dulcet harmony, "to both your Graces for this great condeſcenſion and goodneſs to me: it would be affectation, if I was to appear not to underſtand the extent of my obligations—I feel myſelf ſuperior to artifice. I will even confeſs to Mr. Lexington, that I have conſtrued his politeneſs in my own favour. If I am wrong, my error does not proceed from *vanity*, I have been led into it by appearances;—if

right, I cannot be too ſoon in *rejecting* thoſe honours now unbefitting *me* to receive, or *him* to offer. "Mary," he replied, "you know I am no flatterer; I do not intend to confer honours, but to ſolicit them; I have deceived *you*, but I have *been* deceived."—"By me, Mr. Lexington?"—"No—you are as innocent as angels, and yet I believed you guilty. That d——d Auberry, I *ſee*, has loſt me your affection."—"And I think, Sir (in a more elevated tone than ſhe had ſpoken in before), it will be very little worth your while to endeavour at retrieving my confidence."—"I wiſh you would not *preſume* to look ſo *inchanting* in your anger—you only put people out of what they otherwiſe might ſay in their own defence. Oh! Mary, I muſt play with my agony, or it will deſtroy me—hear my vindication."—Hear him! hear him! hear him! was the cry on our ſide of the houſe.—She found herſelf in a ſad minority, and the motion was paſſed.

Henry

Henry Lexington's Vindication, drawn up for brevity ſake in my own words.

The firſt evidence he produced, was a note unſigned, which your grand-daughter immediately recognized to be Lord Auberry's writing—the contents were theſe:

NOTE.

"A friend of Mr. Lexington's wiſhes to ſee him immediately at *White's*; the buſineſs on which he wants to conſult him is perſonal, therefore he deſires the contents of this note may not tranſpire."

Your ladyſhip will recollect the delivery of this billet to him, on the laſt day he dined in Groſvenor Square.—The wording of it was ſo obſcure, that, not being able to aſcertain the intent of this propoſed meeting, he only ſaid when he went out, that he ſhould ſoon come back, and might *then* probably tell Miſs Montague the reaſon of his abſence. He met Lord Au-

berry at the top of St. James's Street, who acknowledged himſelf to have made the appointment. They adjourned to White's; and as ſoon as they were retired to a private room, he aſked, What were the commands of his Lordſhip?—"Is the day fixed for your marriage with my couſin?" ſaid he. "It is," replied Lexington, "and in three weeks I ſhall be the happieſt of mankind." Auberry ſmiled—"Is that *quite* certain?"—"Do you ſuſpect my *honour*, my Lord?"—"I hold it ſacred, but I always *ſuſpect* the ſtability of a *Lady's* affection." "For your *own* ſake, my Lord, you *muſt* retract that opinion of Miſs Montague."—"Not if I convince you it is well founded?" "Conviction never aſſails *my* mind in a *dubious* form—my confidence in the lovelieſt of women is a mountain of *adamant*, and not to be ſhaken by the hurricane of *words*, or the bluſtering winds of a *thouſand* aſſeverations."—"Then you require proofs?"—"Yes—and damning ones, my Lord, or it ſhall go hard with one of us."—"I have no objections—

tions—but if you are ſatisfied that I do not act the part of a *ſcoundrel*, you ſhall not deny me your friendſhip; and in whatever manner you ſhall chooſe to proceed hereafter, *my name* ſhall never be brought forward." "I underſtand your lordſhip, and accept the terms you offer—Prove it not, and we fight—prove it, and we are friends." Lord Auberry pulled out of his pocket a ſmall red letter-caſe, which he held in his hand for as long a time as he took up in recounting to Henry the beginning and progreſs of his paſſion for your grand-daughter, every circumſtance of which I could find he related faithfully enough, till he came to aſſign a cauſe for the interruption of what he called their mutual felicity, at which part he wandered very ſtrangely: indeed, he had the aſſurance to advance your ladyſhip's diſlike to his mother, as the reaſon why you had interpoſed to detach her from him. He next mentioned the momentary glimpſe he got of her when ſhe firſt came to town—repeated what he then told

her ſhe had to expect from his firmneſs, avowing in the face of heaven he never would reſign his claim upon her affections. He afterwards proceeded to accuſe her of inconſtancy in ſo *ſoon* receiving the addreſſes of another; to which he added, that actuated by pique, he had often denied, and once to herſelf, the exiſtence of a former attachment—it was, he ſaid, in conſequence of her own levity and his reſentment, both being ſupported by the certainty of her approaching marriage—His old prejudices in her favour he had ſuppoſed totally vanquiſhed, in ſo much that he did not feel any repugnance in making one of the family party on that day when the intended union was announced in Groſvenor Square. —" You might then have obſerved," ſaid he, " that *my* attentions were as diffuſe as if *Miſs Montague* had not been *one* of the company; yet I ſaw, or fancied I ſaw, in *her* eyes, when you did not ſee them turned towards me, ſomething of paſt *partiality*. This I did not *attempt* to inſpire, or *wiſh*

to

to encourage: all that I could do *was*, not to appear to *obſerve* it, and to behave in a *cooler* way than I *otherwiſe* ſhould have done, taking myſelf off as ſoon as *decency* would permit.—I will own to you, Lexington, I have ſince *that* day thought of her with *more* tenderneſs than perhaps was conſiſtent with her *preſent* engagements, or my *own* peace. I do not hide my folly, becauſe my honour was ſtill greater, and the moment of *your* marriage with my couſin would have been the *termination* of my reſidence in this country." Nothing particular, he added, had happened ſince their laſt interview; and he was beginning to think he had miſconſtrued her obliging looks too much in his own favour, till he, that morning, received by the hands of a chairman what had finally put the matter out of diſpute. Lord Auberry then took from his little *port folio* ſeveral of your grand-daughter's letters, written to him during the firſt two or three months after he went abroad: theſe *letters*, though addreſſed to a *rival*,

drew from Henry ſuch warm praiſes, as did not ſeem to diſpleaſe Mary, though I cannot take up my time in retailing them.

Continuation.

THE note he vouched with his *honour* to have received *that* morning, was compared word by word, and letter by letter, with her other epiſtles, which taken out of their wrappers lay ſcattered on the table. The keen ſight of a lover, *pre-determined* not to be deceived, could find nothing but *conviction* in every line. Lexington, in a ſtate of diſtraction, without knowing what he was about, put this fatal billet into his pocket. Auberry, immerged in guilt, hurried away the remainder, without obſerving any deficiency in the number; nor was Henry the richer for his theft till many days after it was committed; when accidentally diſcovering that he was poſſeſſed of ſo capital a prize, he treaſured it up with as much caution as gloomy ſouls generally do their precious ſtores of imaginary misfortunes.—

When

When it was produced for our inſpection, we all, even Mary herſelf, acquitted him of *premature* judgment, and of *too* flexible credulity. It is an excellence in the art of forging that never has, or ever can be equalled. You will ſoon ſee the original—in the mean time I ſend you the copy:

"OH! Lord Auberry, to what a dreadful criſis have I been hurried by the ſtrength of my reſentment!—Why have you forced me to deceive myſelf?—to imagine that I returned *your* neglect, *your* contempt, with —what?—With hatred—with diſguſt.—I have too late diſcovered *theſe* are ſentiments I can never feel for *Lord Auberry*—And is it then really *too* late—and muſt I be the wife of another?—Oh! thou who firſt engaged the tendereſt ſentiments of a heart replete with ſenſibility—have I not read in your eyes, though your tongue has been ſilent, that if *I* am miſerable *you* cannot be happy?—If you ſtill wiſh to poſſeſs that hand, which it would be lawful proſtitution

for *me* to preſent to any other huſband, there is *yet* time to ſave me from a fate my ſoul ſhrinks to contemplate. Mr. Lexington is generous; he *thinks* he is beloved, or he would ſcorn the union he now ſo ardently ſolicits.—It is againſt my nature to carry on this deception; yet I cannot—I dare not ſay to him, my *lips* have uttered nothing but forgeries—my *heart* diſavows them;—he deſerves a better fate. To proceed further, would be heaping injuries on *him*, and end in my *own* deſtruction—perhaps in *yours*.—Conſider this ſubject *well*; and if *you* are as miſerable as *I am*, let us not be eternally ſeparated.—See Mr. Lexington, and tell him what I have declared to you—ſhew him my letter, if he doubts the reality of my diſtreſſes, and permit me to ſay to him, that there is but one perſon in the world who is more intitled to my eſteem than himſelf—that my friendſhip will always be his—my love, never! never! never!—I know we *muſt* wait the death of my dear grandmother.—Oh! what a confi-

a conſideration, that our *happineſs* can be only built on her *diſſolution*, whoſe life is ſtill ſo precious to *me*, though her prejudices have ſo long ſhut up our deareſt views, and made me wander in a dreary path of inexplicable error!—Should Mr. Lexington be gracious, and why ſhould I doubt it?—to ſecure my future peace will be an object worthy his exertion—He is not generous by halves; he will therefore refrain from making me a ſubject for *malicious* obſervations—He will not even mention to *me* your *name*, or the cauſe I have given *him* for diſpleaſure.—Was he to ſpeak of *either*, I am ſo ſuſceptible of my own imprudence, that his reproaches would wound my delicacy, and by dying on the ſpot I ſhould expiate my offence in his preſence. —I ſhall be diſtracted till I hear the ſteps you have taken, and what *ſucceſs* has attended them. I expect to-day Mr. Lexington will dine with us as uſual, and I muſt, as uſual, appear in the *deteſtable* maſk of *marked* preference; it never can be pulled

off until ſecurity and tranquillity are again reſtored to the agitated mind of

MARY MONTAGUE."

Continuation.

I could not be with this extraordinary *Mary Montague*, and her extraordinary *grandmother*, when one was reading the original and one the copy of this *curious fabrication*, but I can ſuppoſe them actuated by ſimilar thoughts and ſimilar emotions. The ſeaſon of inconſideration with other girls, has never appeared in the conduct of Miſs Montague: a mind ſo cultured as hers has been, might be called a perfect forcing-houſe for ripening thoſe qualities which are lateſt in coming to perfection.—It is much more difficult to teach a young female how to think with judgment and act with candour, than how to turn out her toes, or run her elaſtic fingers over the keys of an harpſichord.

Oh, innocence! what an anodyne art thou

thou againſt the ſevereſt attacks of misfortune!—Thou feareſt neither the malignant eye or venomous tongue of ſlander;—*truth* is thy invariable friend;—ſooner or later ſhe expands and brings to light all thy virtues, whilſt guilt ſhrinks from thy refulgent brightneſs.—Guilt is a *baſe* reptile, trembles at every foot that approaches, fearing to be diſcovered and trodden under foot; fraud and falſehood are its *weak* allies;—like the mole, this triumvirate works beneath the earth, avoiding every ray of light, leſt they ſhould be detected, and laſhed with the ſcourge of infamy.

Never did innocence ſhew itſelf with brighter illumination than in the countenance of your grand-daughter, whilſt her ſteady eyes were examining the feigned characters calculated to ſtigmatiſe her as the moſt perfidious of her ſex. Having gone through the diabolical forgery with a degree of compoſure that aſtoniſhed even me, who know of what great things her ſoul is capable, ſhe refolded the paper, preſented it to Lexington,

and

and ſaid, "You no longer, Sir, believe me to be the author of *this* letter?"—"Let my penitence," cried he, "atone for my crime that I *ever* did believe it (he fell on his knees before her): I will never riſe till you ſay I am forgiven." She looked abaſhed at his humility; and as if ſhe feared it would be offenſive to *ſome* part of the ſpectators, ſhe extended her hand with a beautiful but agitated motion, and beſought him to get up.—"Ah, there is nothing in your conduct," ſaid ſhe, "by which I can be *gratified* in pronouncing your pardon—the writing on this letter would have deceived my own ſenſes, had that been poſſible—I owe you a great deal of gratitude for your *acquittal*, but no reſentment for your *condemnation*."—"This is as it ſhould be," ſaid the Ducheſs.—The Duke added ſomething to the ſame effect—I believe I was not quite ſilent; but I am willing to paſs over every thing that obſtructs my way to the concluſion of this conference—even the tranſports of Lexington—for, though

though extremely luxuriant, they were not yet arrived at their full growth.

I am going to tell your ladyſhip, uſing as few words as I can, how he accounted for the recovery of his ſenſes, after Lord Auberry had diſpoſſeſſed them by planting in his heart the poiſoned dart of jealouſy.—His lordſhip would not part with him for the remainder of the night—bottle ſucceeded bottle—he drank freely, but the agonies of his mind prevented the wine from taking its uſual effect. At break of day he called at the ——, and ordered poſt-horſes to be got ready—ſent for his man to give him directions.—He then threw himſelf on a ſofa to wait his coming, and fell aſleep, from which quiet ſtate he did not awaken to one of wretchedneſs till the morning was far advanced; when diſpatching his valet to make ready for their departure, he proceeded to Groſvenor Square, where Lady Auberry will recollect how *prettily* he behaved; yet take it altogether, he was not much amiſs neither. I have before mentioned

tioned to you, in beginning to ſpeak of Lexington, that he was not informed of the Duke's indiſpoſition by Lord Francis, but received the intelligence through a private correſpondent, who alſo, by way of ſending him the lateſt news, repeated the whole ſtory of Sir Aſhton Montague and Lord Auberry having united to diſplace Miſs Montague from her paternal and maternal eſtates, curſing the villains who had injured ſo much innocence and beauty.—Poor Henry's eyes were opened as if by enchantment. *Auberry* the perſecutor of *Mary!* If *this* was founded in *fact*, Auberry could not be the *lover* of Mary.—In a moment the riddle was expounded—effulgent truth flaſhed upon his perception, and told him he had been betrayed—that Mary was a victim, himſelf an ideot, and Auberry a ſcoundrel.—Five days and as many nights he travelled with unabated ardour, goaded on by his conſcience, which ſmote him with the violence of an enraged enemy.—He honoured me with his firſt viſit; he laid

laid his wounded mind open to my inſpection, and I poured upon it the balm of conſolation. If any thing of uneaſineſs remained, it was all done away on his firſt interview with the Duke and Ducheſs of Cleveland.

My only motive for not telling your grand-daughter, when I firſt ſaw her, what was the preſent diſpoſition of Henry's mind, proceeded from my perfect knowledge of a certain great lady's humour, who loves to have every thing in her own way, and has taken the compliments I paid her, by not interfering, in very good part.—But to go on with my ſtory.

Continuation.

WHILST Lexington was relating his correſpondent's account of the injuſtice done to Miſs Montague by her *infamous* relations, her colour came and vaniſhed again, with the delicacy and rapidity of ſuch quick ſort of lightning as one ſees often

often emitting its radiant flashes in a clear calm summer's evening; she looked at the Duchess—at me—as if she would have said, 'The Duke knows nothing of all this.'—Her Grace caught the expression, and replied to it, as if it had been made in words—"Don't be silly, child, and fill up your head with fancies: the Duke knows it all." "I do indeed,", cried his Grace, rising and folding his arms round her, "I know how *unworthily* thou hast been treated, beloved daughter of Montague! in *my* heart your father survives.—What *his* transports would have been, had he lived to see thee *great* in prosperity—*greater* in adversity—are my *own* by adoption. If I have the affection, why should I not have the authority of a parent, and *command* you to make us all happy?" I hardly know how to proceed. I said I should cheat you of a few tears, and now will be the most proper time for me to set about it. — Do not restrain them, revered Lady Auberry; they are the children of joy, and will bear off in

their

their ſportive paſſage thoſe troubleſome and weighty taxes which felicity ſeldom fails to lay on when ſhe viſits by ſurpriſe. You may now ſee your grand-daughter at the Duke's feet, eloquent — intereſting — pathetic — no, that will not do, it is not *half* enough: beſides, it equally belongs to Lexington, who was kneeling by her ſide—*ſhe* pouring out the effuſions of gratitude to her generous friends—*he* imploring to be reinſtated in the affections of his lovely miſtreſs. I feel the deſcription is a bad one; but I can make it no better, unleſs I had recourſe to the Pantheon, where under certain ſimilitudes the divine attributes are deified: there I might find ſome figures to aſſiſt my lagging, languid talents; but as I am no heathen, I ſhall keepon with chriſtian truth and chriſtian plainneſs. It is ſtill more impoſſible for me to tell your ladyſhip what was *ſaid*, than what was *lookēd*, by writing, as by ſpeaking; the thing may eaſily be overdone—the imagination is apt to take offence, if the balance of power

is

is entirely on the ſide of words, and the ſtrongeſt meanings are ſometimes entirely explained away by their interference.

I have often delighted to dwell on the praiſes of Mary; but I hope I have *never* told you that Mary was *faultleſs*. If I have been ſo fooliſh, I retract with all my heart; for I have diſcovered in the compoſition of her mind ſo much delicacy, pride, or call it what you will, as ſtands to all intents and purpoſes in lieu of headſtrong wilfulneſs, which I thought in our yeſterday's conteſt we never ſhould have conquered.—*Humility* was her plea, forſooth: other people, who had not the *ſame* excuſe to make, were as *ſelf-willed* as ſhe could be, and a great deal more arbitrary. However, it ended thus—that laſt night the ſame writings, which have been ſo long prepared, were privately executed; and this morning—yes, deareſt Lady Auberry, my ſoul rejoices whilſt I tell you—*this* bleſſed morning your beautiful, amiable grand-daughter became the bride of a man whom I lately thought ſo unworthy

unworthy—whom I now think ſo worthy of the treaſure he poſſeſſes.—I lay down my pen to give you a moment's breathing time.

Continuation.

AFTER we had gained ſomething like a victory over thoſe phantoms which the dignity of her ſpirit oppoſed to our wiſhes, and to the happineſs of Henry, ſhe condeſcended to put on the ſweeteſt air of entreaty you ever beheld; ſhe beſought thoſe who had taken her reſolutions captive, that ſhe might be indulged by the grant of two petitions: one was, that the Duke and Ducheſs would permit her to make a viſit to Riverſdale; the other was, to exact a promiſe from Lexington, never to revenge her wrongs, either on Lord Auberry or Sir Aſhton Montague.—The firſt exactly tallied with her Grace's own plan, and was complied with.—Henry demurred—but what are the demurs of a lover? The imperious ſpirit of a horſe is under the controul

troul of a ſkilful rider, and the generous ſpirit of man is reſtrained by the influence of beauty; yet your grand-daughter, with all her powers of faſcination, had ſome difficulty to make the fiery youth amenable to the timidity of *her* fears for his ſafety, and perhaps would not have been at *laſt* ſucceſsful, had ſhe not ſolemnly declared never to receive his vows on any *other* terms, which only could have reduced him to obedience. The Ducheſs manages every thing, and has not yet entruſted me with the whole of her deſigns.—The Duke is twenty years younger than he was eight-and-forty hours ago; he loves his nephew, but adores your Mary.—To-day for the firſt time he dined with his family; what a handful of happy people we were!—how tranſported the bridegroom!—how enchanting the bride!—I cannot tell you the ſoul-intoxicating felicity in which we were all overwhelmed. The Duke had procured the archbiſhop's licenſe before Lord Auberry's inſidious manœuvre was completed.

His Grace intended *then* to have cheated her into an earlier marriage than ſhe was aware of, and this morning it was uſed to a very *good* purpoſe.—The ceremony took place at eleven o'clock; it was performed by the domeſtic chaplain—a ſeal of ſecrecy faſtened on his lips and on mine, nobody elſe being preſent except the Duke and Ducheſs. When Henry firſt ſhewed himſelf in Groſvenor Square, her Grace ordered it to be reported through the houſe, that Mr. Lexington was returned on particular buſineſs, which would only detain him one day, and that it was neceſſary his being in town ſhould be kept private. Why this caution, you will aſk, when it muſt be known that he was come back, by his going home yeſterday to change his dreſs?—It was all a fineſſe—he has not been once out of this houſe ſince he came into it; and when the porter told us at the door, on our return from Richmond, that Mr. Lexington was juſt gone out, it was done by her Grace's orders, who had reaſon to gueſs what

what would be the firſt queſtion aſked by Miſs Montague. Miſs Montague!—Well, how ſhall I ever uſe myſelf to call her Mrs. Lexington? I made this obſervation to her half an hour ago; ſhe threw her arms round my neck, and, hiding her baſhful face on my boſom, bid me remember that ſhe was *ſtill* the Mary of her grandmother and Lady Jane Petworth.—"I ſhall think," ſaid ſhe, "you have ceaſed to love me, if you ever drop the endearing appellation." A *courier* ſets off with this pacquet at the dawn of day; ſo that your ladyſhip will have broke the ſeals, and know whom you are to expect ſome hours before you preſs in your maternal arms the moſt amiable pair that the ſacred bands of Hymen ever united. The Ducheſs has ordered her travelling chaiſe to convey Miſs Montague, as moſt of the ſervants ſtill believe her to be, as far as —, where ſhe will be joined by Henry, who, to avoid giving any cauſe for ſuſpicion, does not come up with her at a nearer ſtage, nor will ſhew himſelf at —— till the Duke's

ſervants are gone back to town.—The Duchеſs's woman attends your grand-daughter ſo far on her journey, ſhe will make it out afterwards well enough under the auſpices of her new protector.—Little Jenny muſt fare as ſhe can; when Mrs. Bindwell leaves them, I ſuppoſe Lexington will ſtuff her and her band-boxes into a hack, with his own man to conſole her for the loſs of her miſtreſs's company.—Mrs. Bindwell and Jenny are both in the ſecret, and may be depended on. When you embrace your dear children, they will tell you, their time at Riverſdale is limited by the Ducheſs, from whom, and the Duke, you will receive by their conveyance, ſuch letters as I am ſure muſt delight you.—Lexington's ſiſters have done for themſelves in Groſvenor Square;—the Ducheſs has made no concealment of their impertinence.—It is impoſſible I ſhould tell you how much her Grace hates every body who has been the enemy of your Mary.—"My ſending her away," ſaid ſhe to me yeſterday, "will be

fine food for all the *twittering* miſſes and *ſhall-I-go-naked* girls of quality;—I dreſs up her abſence to *their* pallate, and ſeaſon it with the appearance of diſgrace, *merely* to make them the more diſreliſh what will come afterwards: it is to pleaſe my own humour that I have managed this marriage with ſo much privacy, that when it breaks upon them, they may find in her good fortune their own proper puniſhment."

If I go on telling you every thing ſaid by the Ducheſs, I ſhall never have done; I therefore only hint, that there is a plot carrying on, which I heartily pray may take effect, as it will bring all very ſoon into your preſence, though not at Riverſdale; I am ſure my niece Beauly will ſide with the friendly conſpirators, and your ladyſhip will not ſingly be able to reſiſt ſo powerful a body.—If nature was not ſometimes fatigued with her own exertions, and required to be rocked in the cradle of repoſe, who would ever find themſelves tired when writing to Lady Auberry, *and* on a ſubject

ſo

ſo charming as her grand-daughter?—The inſipid being who would complain of wearineſs, thus employed, does not love either the one or the other, with half the fervency with which they are beloved by their faithfully devoted

J. PETWORTH.

LETTER VIII.

Mrs. Oxburn to Sir Ashton Montague.

May 10, 17—.

CERTAINLY I am bewitched, or I ſhould never think of throwing ſo much of my precious time away in finding you amuſement when you are laid up, maimed and wounded, incapable of making me any manner of return for my civility; one letter has hardly reached you, when off goes another. I hate to be ſelfiſh, and though you are half dead, I have no other body on the face of the earth with whom I can truſt my thoughts or my obſervations. What in the world can they be about in Groſvenor-ſquare!—they are all as mute as mice—not a ſcrap of intelligence can I pick up from that blind quarter—Go into the houſe I dare not—you know

our

our haughty Ducheſs has forbidden me the bleſſings of her ſociety. I told my maid to ſend and invite the upper ſervants to a ball, and put myſelf to a deal of expence that ſhe might do the thing handſomely; but they had all *prior* engagements—hang their airs! I believe the Duke, Ducheſs, men-ſervants and maid-ſervants, are gone mad; this little *Circe* has turned the heads of them altogether. There is no torture equal to burſting with curioſity: twenty guineas would I give for half an hour's dear chit-chat with even one of the *menials* of the family, but they all fly me as they would the peſtilence. Yeſterday the porter paſſed me in Bond-ſtreet, he moved his hat, I called him to the ſide of my carriage, he did not or would not hear me, but quickened his pace and was out of ſight in a moment — this is *my* ill luck — ſo diligent yet ſo ill rewarded! I have my watches too about the ſquare, but all the tidings they bring me are good for nothing—many carriages, they ſay, ſtop at the door, but

nobody is let in. Poor old Toovey is breaking her heart at my Lord *Duke's* and my Lady *Ducheſs's* diſpleaſure—Piſh, ſaid I, they will ſoon be tired of their *tame* pet —are not the whole tide of nobility on *our* ſide?—*Well, to be ſure,* this is all true—but what does Mr. Lexington ſay?—Oh Lord! why he has thrown her quite off, there can never be any connexion between them as long as oak, aſh, and gribble grows. She *has* been a novelty—all *novelties* meet with fools to run after them, and at laſt they ſink into oblivion. Your ſtately neighbours, when convinced they can hold her up no longer, will do as the reſt of the world has done, and like us the better for our part in the buſineſs—*That* will be *charming!* and away ſhe went to her carriage in a ſort of hyſteric ſomething between a laugh, a cry, and a ſquall. Not another word—Jack Trundle is at my door, he beckons me to take a drive in his curricle. Adieu.

Continuation.

Well, to be ſure, as Toovey ſays, Jack is an incorrigible *quiz*, but I have been amply paid for my good humour in going out with him, as you ſhall hear; for I am ſwelling with exultation, and die if I don't give it vent. Brentford lay in our road—we were paſſing through the town with the velocity of lapwings, when at the Three Pigeons ſtood the Duke of Cleveland's travelling chaiſe—there was nobody in it, but the horſes were changing with much ſeeming expedition. I pulled my companion by the arm and made him rein in, whilſt with my other hand I beckoned to a groom whom I knew to belong to the Duke, and aſked what part of the family were travelling, and where they were going. He ſaid it was only Miſs Montague, her maid, and Mrs. Bindwell; that the two former were on their way to Riverſdale, and the latter would go back again after ſhe had ſeen the young lady

two ſtages beyond Brentford. I enquired how long Miſs Montague was to ſtay in the country. Always, I believe, my lady, he replied, for Mrs. Bindwell ſaid in the hall to day, that we were none of us likely to ſee Miſs Montague again; and then the fool ran on with ſuch a ridiculous pack of nonſenſe about *her* goodneſs and *their* grief at loſing her, as brought tears into his eyes, and ſent half a guinea quietly back to my purſe, which if he had not ſo heinouſly offended me by his ſorrowful panegyric, I intended to have given him for his news. It was directly over with my airing—I made the heavy-headed charioteer turn his ponies towards Hyde Park Corner; in performing our drive back we were only forty minutes, and I would have flown on the wings of the wind, if any of them had condeſcended to have taken up my elegant figure on the tips of their pinions, ſo dearly do I love certain ſorts of good-natured communications. I found three carriages waiting

waiting at my door, all brimful of dear good-natured creatures like your friend Car.—My ſervant was telling them the melancholy tidings that I was not at home, when, jumping on the pavement, I appeared before them *in propria perſona*—they were electrified; open flew the doors, down went the ſteps, out they capered, and away we all huddled up ſtairs together, every one of my viſitors with a card in her hand. We left the *charming* Toovey, who hobbles like an old gooſe, at the bottom ſqualling after us, I have got one too—ſo had I too, Montague, it came in my abſence, and I found it lying on my table; we compared every one with another; the contents being exactly the ſame, in ſending you my *own* prize you will know the preciſe value of all the reſt.

Card.

The Ducheſs of Cleveland ſees company on the 22d, to celebrate the Duke's reco-

very, and another event that has taken place in Groſvenor-ſquare. Miſs Montague is not expected from Riverſdale.

What a conceſſion!—Yes, that *we* were all in the right and her *Grace* in the wrong—juſt ſo—well to be ſure!—oh, oh! it is all up with the would-be lady. Theſe words and ten thouſand more were flying about like ſnow in a freezing atmoſphere. I ſhall not ſtay to ſort them, or tell you whom they belonged to: we were all hearty well-wiſhers to the cauſe. I thought that now I might venture to call again, and expected to complete my day of triumph by driving in a *family way* according to the *old* ſtyle; but when I ſtopped at the door ten minutes ago I was informed their Graces were going to Richmond for ſome days, and did not mean to receive any viſits till the 22d. I ſuppoſe they both want ſtrengthening after this great effort of ſending home their *girl*; but I can tell them *what*, had they not given *her* up, all

the

the world would have given *them* up. I aſked *Cerberus* a million of queſtions; the brute anſwered but two—Is there to be a ball on the 22d? was one of them—Yes, he believed ſo, for the muſic was beſpoke. Did Mary cry when ſhe went away? was the ſecond—No, but ſhe makes every other body cry, for there is not ſuch another lady in the whole world as Miſs Montague. I wonder the Ducheſs allows you to ſpeak thus of a *diſgraced* favourite, ſaid I, and ordered my ſervants to go on. I hope, Montague, you will be in town and able to make a leg with us by the 22d; if not, you had better make up your mind about getting any more letters till the fête is over; then, if your ſurgeon is a blockhead and chooſes to keep you in hand longer than there is occaſion for, you may expect to hear again from

your affectionate friend and comforter,

CAR. OXBURN.

LETTER IX.

Arthur Melliſh, Eſq. to Lord Francis Lexington.

London, May 11, 17—.

My Lord,

YOUR lordſhip's laſt letter informed me of your intentions to remain two or three weeks at ———: ſhould you be ſtill there, my good lord, a very few days will convey this to your hand, and as few more may, with your lordſhip's pleaſure, wind and tide not againſt us, bring you back to England; your lordſhip's reſearches in foreign countries can no longer be carried to account; the Marchioneſs Felicia is in London, and I know not how to act till honoured with your lordſhip's written or perſonal commands, for I have now no authority to proceed by, and the apprehenſion

henſion of committing an error makes me fearful of taking any ſtep in the affair. Poor lady! her ſituation appears to be a very equivocal one, much beneath the dignity of her birth and the very great fortune to which ſhe is heireſs; in ſhort, my lord, I will not deceive you, the Marchioneſs your *ward*, on whom your lordſhip beſtowed ſo *much* care and ſo *much* money, has by accident or misfortune been reduced to ſervitude. I ſaw her with my own eyes as I paſſed this day through ——: her dreſs, which was a brown ſtuff gown and round coif, declared her ſtation in the family to be a menial one: ſhe was ſtanding at a parlour window with only one half of the blind open, ſeemed very ſtudious, and looked as if ſhe had been weeping. I ſtood ſtill obſerving her, to make ſure that I was not miſtaken—Alas! my lord, it was really the marchioneſs, my heart yearned at her condition; and wiſhing to relieve *her*, yet fearing to offend your *lordſhip*, I was ſo much confuſed that

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in my firſt alarm, for ſhe had not obſerved me, I took the knocker in my hand, but let it go again, and thought I could not err by ſending your lordſhip notice of the diſcovery. This being the day when the foreign mails ſet out, and not having a moment to loſe, I am forced to delay my enquiries reſpecting the family where ſhe ſeems to reſide till this is ſent off—your lordſhip may depend on my diligence that ſhe does not eſcape us a ſecond time. The myſtery that attends her birth, which your lordſhip has ſo often told me you would not like to have revealed for her *father's* ſake, makes me ſo circumſpect in not awakening curioſity, or raiſing a buſtle about the buſineſs, without firſt being honoured with your lordſhip's commands; in the mean time I ſhall be both watchful and impatient, being, my lord, with inviolable fidelity, your lordſhip's

Moſt devoted and
Obedient humble ſervant,
A. MELLISH.

LETTER X.

Miſs Beauly to Lady Jane Petworth.

May 14, 17—

I Believe, my dear aunt, that living with a very ſenſible perſon, ſuch a woman for inſtance as Lady Auberry, ſteadies the wild incoherency of extravagant emotions, and does a world of good to a creature ſo imperfect as I am. With a thouſand frantic joys fluctuating from my brain to my pen, one rudely puſhing before another, how could I, at leaſt for half a year, have ſet ſoberly down to give you the detail you expect?—The example of Lady Auberry's moderation helps me; for when I conſider how much ſtronger her feelings muſt be than mine, and that ſhe makes no fuſs about them—I almoſt feel aſhamed that my own are ſo ungovernable.—Knowledge

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is the consequence of time, and multitude of days are fittest to *teach wisdom*.—I have got my lesson from a perfect mistress; and though I am not a very creditable scholar, yet with *much* time and *multitude* of days, I may hope to make a better figure than I do at present.—Well, but this charming *marriage*—so exquisitely *charming*—so unexpected!—Though I have embraced and congratulated the dear Mary, though I hear Mr. Lexington proudly call her *his* adorable *wife*, yet to me it seems all like a dream—I rub my eyes, and ask if it can be possible?—How few are her years—how eventful her history—how glorious the termination of her trials!—One would think the Countess *D'Arroi*, when she wrote the beautiful Allegory of Florina, had lived in this country at this time, and meant to illustrate the character, the sufferings, and the rewards of Mary.—Pray, dear aunt, get the fairy tales written by this elegant French woman.—The one that I allude to you will find in the third volume, and must

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acknowledge that it is either a *picture* or a *prophecy*.—Inſtead of recommending other people's labours to your peruſal, I ought to be furniſhing you with entertainment from the domeſtic occurrences that have paſſed, and are ſtill paſſing at Riverſdale.—It is not from poverty, but abundance of matter, that I am behind-hand, keeping my darling ſubject ſo long in the back ground; but there is ſo much of it, that I can hardly tell which object I muſt bring forward—I believe it ſhall be Lady Auberry, when ſhe got your delightful letter yeſterday morning; for if I do not give her the precedence, all the reſt will be a chaos of confuſion, and nothing in its right place.—Your *courier* arrived at nine in the morning.—You know I love ſleep and require a great deal of it.—My maid was gone out to ramble about till my waking time, and the family ſervants did not think fit to diſturb me before ſhe came back; ſo that I knew nothing of the matter till Lady Auberry ſent up her woman with your dear kind

kind letter to me, and with it a meſſage to deſire I would come to her as ſoon as I could make myſelf ready. I was not long in obeying theſe commands; your billet had let me into the grand ſecret.—I did not know all, but I knew enough to ſend me down half dreſſed, and in a tranſport of joy bordering on agony.—Inſtead of meeting with any thing like my own emotions in Lady Auberry, ſhe was ſitting up in her bed;—your letter, or rather letters, lay open before her, and the only ſymptom of *extraordinary* agitation that I could diſcover, was a little additional paleneſs, which the haſty touch of ſurpriſe had impreſſed on her countenance. I reined in my tumultuous gladneſs as well as I could; it ſeemed profane to approach her, who was ſerenity perſonified, with unregulated paſſions of any ſort. "I thank you for this effort," ſaid ſhe, holding out her hand, drawing me to her, and preſſing her cheek to mine, "you know my good fortune, you rejoice in it more than you will confeſs, but

but your eyes tell me what your tongue in kindneſs holds back;—you are in the right, my love, I am labouring to put my mind under a wholeſome regimen—forcing it to be calm even againſt its conſtitution.—I am teaching my ſoul ſparingly and daintily to ſip from the cup of happineſs, ſo as to be refreſhed, not intoxicated."—"Oh! deareſt Lady Auberry," ſaid I ſoftly, "let me ſit down by you; I will not open my lips, but let me hear you talk thus for ever—make me more amenable to reaſon—make me wiſer and better by your example."—"I do not want to have you any wiſer or better than you are, my dear child," ſhe replied, with a ſmile that had ſaint and angel mingled in it; "you muſt not expect to be a philoſopher until you have ſerved as long an apprenticeſhip to the ſcience as I have done.—Youth is like a bloſſom, that gives beauty in hand and fruit in proſpect; but age grows worſe and worſe upon the progreſs."

What a ſpeculation, my dear aunt! it hangs

hangs round my fancy, and seems to have turned it quite grey.—I believe I shall immediately set about making myself a fit companion for old age, that when it steals upon me, we may not be a disgrace to each other.

Lady Auberry folded up the papers, first kissing, then laying them on her heart: "What a treasure of goodness and friendship does this packet contain!" said she; "but I have no right to keep it *all* to myself;—go then, my dear child, share with me the bounty of your excellent aunt, and make the good Sandford a partner also.—I will come to you in an hour—I shall by that time have gained strength to talk rationally, and to give rational directions for the reception of my"——She paused; I saw the effusion of tenderness which ushered in the names that were to follow, and shook her whole frame; and not to give her the pleasing pain of pronouncing them, I did as she had directed, and rejoiced over your dear letters with the dear old man, till sit-

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ting down in two chairs oppoſite to each other, we fell into a profound ſilence, unable to rejoice any longer. Wrapped in this agreeable ſtupidity, we waited but a few moments before Lady Auberry, her face covered with ſmiles, and her eyes emitting all ſorts of virtues, and every ſpecies of innate felicity, came out of her dreſſing-room. "Come," ſaid ſhe, holding out her arms to embrace me, and offering her venerable cheek to the ſalute of the humble divine, "come, my friends, *now* you may congratulate me on the good news we have received, for *now* I can bear your joys as well as my own.—I have been praying for ſupport to that beneficent Power who laid the *weight* of this mighty happineſs upon me, and by giving the praiſe to *God* have lightened my *own* burthen." I will not tell you what reply either of us made; it would be like deſiring you to liſten to the croaking of frogs when a full band of nightingales were inviting your attention. I obſerved her ladyſhip carried in her hand a little

a little red pocket-book, which after a time, ſhe preſented to Mr. Sandford. "This," ſaid ſhe, "was intended as a ſmall token of acknowledgment to you, Sir, when I thought it would be no longer in my power to make your ſituation in my family adequate to your merits; that *unkind* neceſſity which would have drawn in my *hands*, though I hope not controuled my *heart*, is by the eſtabliſhment of my grand-daughter happily removed, and now, my good friend, I aſk you to accept it as a *preſent* on her marriage; you have not indeed performed the ceremony, nevertheleſs that you had a *claim* to the performance cannot be diſputed." As he received the pocket-book, he tried to expreſs his thanks; they were not to be expreſſed in words, but he *looked* them in *full*.—He has a long train of grand-children and great grand-children, who want his aſſiſtance, and perhaps it was the idea of helping them, through the bounty of his benefactreſs, that ſtopped up the paſſage of articulation.—He has ſince told me

the contents were bank notes for two hundred pounds.—The letters which accompanied yours to Lady Auberry from the Duke and Ducheſs of Cleveland, make me dote on them for their whole conduct through this wonderful affair.—I love to ſee the oppreſſors of innocence ſcourged for their envy and wickedneſs by the rods prepared for them.—Tell me of every ſtripe they receive.—Oh! how heartily ſhall I rejoice in their mortification! no doubt it will be ſevere enough, conſidering who has taken upon herſelf to inflict it.—You may gueſs by my requeſting a deſcription that I do not ſee any great probability of my being preſent to partake of the gratifying *execution*.—Lady Auberry has not ſaid *much* on the ſubject of her returning to town with the bride; yet by what little ſhe has let fall, there ſeems no foundation for caſtle building; and unleſs ſhe does go to town, or my dear aunt ſhould command my attendance on her, nothing on earth ſhall move me from my preſent ſituation, where

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if I do not ſow the ſeeds of many advantages, from which, with good cultivation, I may reap fruit in my old age, it muſt be my own fault—The proſpect, however, is worth looking after, and ſhould not be careleſsly relinquiſhed.

Mr. and Mrs. Lexington did not make their *entré* at Riverſdale till ſeven o'clock in the evening.—The proceſſion that followed and preceded the happy pair, though not ſo numerous or ſplendid as that of a monarch in the fulneſs of triumph, was nevertheleſs as reſpectable; and why ſhould it not be ſo?—Mary is quite a little queen, for ſhe reigns in every heart within ten miles of Lady Auberry's reſidence.—This neighbourhood has been her *dominion*—her ſceptre *virtue*, and her crown *content*.—Before I go farther, I muſt ſtop to aſſure you there is no danger that our innocent rejoicings on this occaſion ſhould reach your fine town circles, and ſo blow the coal when the taper is not ready for lighting; on the contrary, we are ſo remote from the

regions of fashion, that our trúmpet of fame will never be heard within the *precincts* of St. James's.—We humble folks shun all connexion with the great bustling world;—we have even all our commodities quietly from the manufacturing towns, and have literally nothing to do with London—a journey to *that* place is almost an unheard of circumstance; and since the wretches Boden and his diabolical tribe are no longer inhabitants of our peaceful shades, we may do what we please: we may therefore allow the happy tenantry and peasantry to celebrate the wedding of their beloved young mistress, without fear of offending the Duchess, by breaking in upon her inimitable construction of rational revenge.

Lady Auberry herself had no objection that her grand-daughter should be received with public honours.—The dear woman has suffered enough already from the consequences of one private marriage in her family; and perhaps this was her reason,

though ſhe did not declare it, for coinciding in the prayers of her tenants and dependants to meet the gracious couple a few miles from the caſtle, and conduct them to Riverſdale.—Her change of name and expected return were no ſooner known to the houſehold, than the report ſpread through the adjacent hamlets as faſt as one ſet of pariſh bells could convey the ſounds of joy to another. Mr. Sandford mounted his ſleek nag, and went to give the glad intelligence to that good creature Harvey, who, if I had a hundred lawſuits on my hands, ſhould have them all for his adherence to Lady Auberry.—They came back together.—When we were in trouble, I ſaw him nearly melancholy mad;—now we are rejoicing, he is quite as mad the other way.—He deſired to have the arrangement of the cavalcade, and, putting himſelf at the head of horſe and foot, marched through the lawn yeſterday at four o'clock in the afternoon, muſtering from five to ſix hundred men, women, and children, dreſſed in their Sunday

day clothes, every one a *bouquet* of heart's-eaſe in their boſom, emblematic of the occaſion, with boughs of laurel in their hats, or ſomething green to reſemble laurel.—It was a charming ſight; ſo thought Lady Auberry, who ſignified her approbation of their ardour and good diſcipline by more than verbal teſtimonies. Mr. Sandford was deputed to make out a liſt of the names, numbers, and abode of every family, all of which are to be largely conſidered in her extenſive plans of inexhauſtible benevolence.

When we ſat down to dinner, ſhe could eat nothing.—I ſaw what was the cauſe, and that every lagging moment which intervened between expectation and certainty, as it crippled out of ſight, carried away ſome ſmall portion of her compoſure, and left behind it an increaſe of anxiety.—I was not officiouſly troubleſome in recommending particular diſhes to her appetite, or ſeemed to take notice that it wanted courtſhip; for I have always obſerved, and

I know it by experience, that when the mind is oppreſſed, either by joy or ſadneſs, it will much ſooner move off its own burthen, and much more effectually, than if another comes and ſtrives to ſhove it away: the tears have often come into my eyes, and would have overflowed, had any body looked tenderly upon me at that moment; but meeting with no obſerver, when they peeped out at the door, they have gone quickly back again.—As a proof how well my ſyſtem anſwered, Lady Auberry dropped the penſiveneſs ſhe had fallen into—recovered her ſpirits, and took her coffee as uſual. "I am convinced," ſaid ſhe, "I have been behaving in a very untoward ſort of way, though you have been ſo good as not to take notice of my mind's indiſpoſition.—I ſhould be really very glad to underſtand the nature of my own feelings, if that was a knowledge to be acquired.—Here am I," continued ſhe with a ſmile of ſelf-ridicule, "like a ſpoilt child, ſurrounded by indulgences — His prayers

granted—his wiſhes complied with—the moſt extravagant of his hopes realized—he frets—is peeviſh—will not eat—cannot tell what is the matter with him—*ſomething* is ſtill wanting—which *ſomething* is, that having *all* the good things within his reach, he does not know what he ſhall aſk for next—ſuch is the frailty." She was proceeding, when a diſtinct though diſtant ſhout put a ſtop to her obſervation.—We threw up the ſaſh—ſaw nobody—but ſoon heard the ſhout repeated, and perceptibly nearer. Lady Auberry caught hold of my hand, and, riſing from her chair, ventured to look out. I felt her tremble exceedingly, and wiſhed for her ſake the firſt interview was over. A ſervant in the Lexington livery came ſwiftly up the avenue; but her eyes were ſtretched far beyond him; and before I had diſtinguiſhed any thing like a carriage, ſhe ſunk down again into her chair, exclaiming with folded hands, "Bleſſed God, I have ſeen the heads of their horſes!" I thought ſhe might faint, and gave her my ſalts, but ſhe put them

from her.—"I am not faint," ſaid ſhe, "I am only dying with exceſs of pleaſure. —Go!—oh go!—and"—The craſh of the wheels on the gravel made me wiſh to go down and receive our dear gueſt, but the fear of leaving Lady Auberry alone nailed me to her ſide.—Do you expect, dear aunt, that I am to tell you the door burſt ſuddenly open, and that Mrs. Lexington ruſhed into the arms of her grand-mother? —Indeed it was not ſo, nor can I tell you how it was.—I only know that I ſaw her one moment an aerial being, the ſpirit of tranquillity, if you pleaſe, gliding ſylph-like over the floor—and the next at the feet of Lady Auberry;—that the ſweeteſt tears were ſhed at this meeting, which pleaſure ever inſpired, or rapture ever let fall. Mr. Lexington did not preſent himſelf till the venerable parent of his Mary had recovered from the firſt ſtruggles ſhe had to maintain with joy of that exquiſite kind, which to a ſoul ſo ſuſceptible, at an age ſo advanced, is ſometimes more powerful in

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its operations than its contrary extreme.—The dark and gloomy complexion of grief gives warning of what it is capable, and bids the mind be on its guard; but joy darts upon us with a countenance so flattering, that whilst we embrace it as a friend, we hug it to our own destruction. I have sat up the whole night to finish this letter, because I would not break in on any of the charming to-morrow.—Certainly marriage is a great beautifier—such a one as this, I mean, where the hearts, proud of being consulted, throw themselves into every feature to proclaim that interest has nothing to do with their alliance.—The enchanting Mary was never half so enchanting as now that she is the wife of Lexington—the amiable Lexington, not half so amiable as now that he is the husband of Mary. Lady Auberry takes her eyes from the one, only to fix them on the other.—Who can tell the fond messages of love they are charged with, whilst in the act of contemplating these favourites of fe-

licity? It is equally impoſſible to deſcribe the tender affection — the reverence — I might almoſt ſay the devotion, with which they adore this adorable parent.

Nothing could reconcile us to ſo early a ſeparation as the 19th, but the aſſurances we receive from yourſelf, as well as the Duke and Ducheſs, that you will all eſcort them back again to Riverſdale, ſoon after the *fête* on the 22d is over. The greateſt of my happineſs on this occaſion will proceed from that tender affection, and inviolable duty, with which I am my deareſt aunt's

ANNA BEAULY.

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LETTER XI.

Lady Jane Petworth to Lady Auberry.

May 15, 17—.

WILL this letter have the good luck to reach Riverſdale before the proud Lexington and his fortunate Mary leave it? Be that as it may, the communications I am about to make you, my dear Lady Auberry, will enſure their own welcome. I have a new adventure to relate, and will give it in as few words as poſſible:—Yeſterday I left the Duke and Ducheſs of Cleveland at Richmond, and went to viſit a friend who lives two miles beyond Egham: in paſſing through that pleaſant village my attention was arreſted by a vaſt concourſe of people aſſembled round the door of the principal inn: a litter ſtood

before it, from which ſeveral men, two of them in the Montague livery, were aſſiſting ſomebody who ſeemed incapable of helping himſelf. Aſſailed by a confuſed idea, which I can find no words to expreſs, I pulled the check and enquired the name of the invalid, but could get no information: the ſame impulſe that moved me to aſk the queſtion carried me ſtill further; I got out, followed him into the houſe, and ordered my ſervants to put up: nobody was at leiſure to ſhew me a room, ſo I turned into a parlour on the left hand; and having rung the bell ſeveral times, at laſt the miſtreſs came with many apologies for the inattention of herſelf and family, which ſhe ſaid had been occaſioned by the arrival of a poor gentleman in the very act of dying, and had thrown them all into the greateſt conſternation. The door was left half open. I obſerved one of the men who had come with the ſick perſon paſſing it in much haſte: he looked round, ſaw me, and in taking off his hat I knew him to be

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a servant who, after living with me ten years, in a drunken frolic got himself inlisted for a soldier. I dispatched the woman for refreshments, and beckoned him to come in. "So! John," said I, "you have regained your liberty, I see: pray who is your present master?"—"Sir Ashton Montague, my lady; but I must soon look out for another—he is dying, and I am going for more doctors." I could now account for the *presentiment* that forced me into the house, and I learnt from John, that Sir Ashton's horse throwing him some days ago, he had since the accident happened been detained in a country place, where not finding the hurt he had received in his leg likely to grow better, he was on his way to town for further advice. Though obliged to travel in a litter, the surgeon who attended him before travelled with him, and did not apprehend any danger till they came near Egham, where he was taken so ill that he could go no further; all the doctors in the neighbourhood were

ſent for, and he was proceeding to fetch others from London, but was ſure his maſter would not be alive by the time he ſhould get there. Poor wretch! thought I, then the vengeance of Heaven has indeed overtaken thee. I found he had been carried into a room oppoſite to that I occupied. John being diſmiſſed, the woman brought me what I had ordered. I aſked her how Sir Aſhton Montague did—"I have juſt carried in a fomentation of ſpirits (ſhe ſaid), and never ſaw ſuch a miſerable object: the mortification is ſo rapid that one can almoſt ſee it run up his leg: there are two of our ſurgeons with him now, beſides the gentleman who attended the litter: they have all told him nothing but immediate amputation of the limb can give him a chance of life."—"And what does he ſay to that?"—"Oh, my lady, he weeps like a baby, tears the hair from his head, and cries out upon ſome lady ſo piteouſly as would melt marble to hear him."—"Can you tell me the lady's

name

name on whom he calls?"—"I thought it was the ſame with his own, at leaſt it ſounded to me very like Montague; he muſt ſee her, he ſays, before he will ſubmit to the operation."—"Go (ſaid I) with Lady Jane Petworth's compliments, tell him I am in your houſe, and ſhall be glad if I can be uſeful to him." I trembled with agitation till I knew what would be the return of my meſſage; to ſee him I was reſolved, but in the ſituation to which he was reduced I wiſhed my viſit might rather ſooth than diſtreſs him. It was full ten minutes before ſhe came back, and then ſaid, that when he heard my name he had fainted, and was but juſt recovered: he bade her preſent his thanks for my goodneſs, and would ſee me in a quarter of an hour; that he had ordered every body out of the room but his valet, who, ſhe added, is to let your ladyſhip know when he is ready to receive your viſit. It was more than an hour before I heard any more from the ſick man; and I will defy you to

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gueſs in what agonies of ſuſpenſe I paſſed this uncomfortable interval. At length the ſervant ſhe ſpoke of appeared; he delivered me a large packet curiouſly ſealed, together with Sir Aſhton's compliments, who referred me to the papers for an explanation why he found himſelf neceſſitated to decline the honour I intended him. I deſired he might be told that I ſhould continue where I then was ſome hours longer, and if in that time he happened to change his preſent determination he might command me.

The ſhort moment I was ſpeaking to this man, my fingers were buſily employed in ſounding the depth of the packet: it was thick, it ſeemed to promiſe much, and my heart leaped to my throat on tearing the ſeals aſunder, when I ſaw ſeveral papers that were turned yellow from keeping—I will hold you no longer in ſuſpenſe—I am in poſſeſſion of the ſtolen will—of the certificate—of all the credentials that can reſtore your injured grand daughter

to her mangled maſſacred honours.—What ſhall we ſay to this great and providential event, except we exclaim with the Royal Prophet, "The Lord executeth righteous judgment for all thoſe who are oppreſſed with wrong!" After I had kiſſed, preſſed, and welcomed back theſe dear long loſt papers like a frantic enthuſiaſt, the next I caſt my eye on was a ſmaller packet which contained ſeveral ſheets of paper fully written on all ſides, without a ſeal, and addreſſed to Miſs Montague. The Ducheſs has the original, and will not let it out of her hands; ſo you muſt be ſatisfied with as many of the contents as my memory is able to furniſh, till the whole can be laid before you on our happy meeting at Riverſdale: till then I ſhall ſay nothing of the energy and pathos with which it is written, but, leaving the ſpirit behind, collect the matter in as ſhort a compaſs as I can. He had contracted the habits of friendſhip for Lord Auberry; at a very early period they had purſued

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their ſtudies together, and Mrs. Pledell's houſe was his ſecond home—*ſhe* was artful, *her* daughter handſome—they laid a plan to draw in his affections, and ſucceeded. Flattered by their endeavours to pleaſe, he propoſed himſelf to Mrs. Pledell, who aſſured him of her readineſs to accept him for her ſon-in-law, provided he was not ſo much his own enemy as to oppoſe her plans of reinſtating him in that part of the Montague eſtate from which he was excluded by the marriage of his relation with Lady Mary Pledell, and the exiſtence of a daughter by that union; which plans being accompliſhed, no objections on her part ſhould thwart their inclinations, provided till then their attachment to each other was carefully concealed, not only from her ſon, but all the reſt of the world. The wretched penitent ſays, he yielded to this compromiſe with difficulty, but grew every hour leſs and leſs reluctant, till at laſt his heart became perfectly callous, and he gave himſelf up to the abſolute govern-

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ment of theſe female harpies. Before Lord Auberry paſſed over to the continent, he told the ladies of his family, as well as his friend Sir Aſhton, the engagements he had entered into with your grand-daughter, and ſpoke of his divine Mary in terms that convinced them it would be no idle buſineſs to make him abandon the purſuit. Mrs. Pledell conſtrained her rage in his preſence, coldly obſerving that he could not have choſen a wife from any family ſo *diſguſting* to her—yet ſhe was ſenſible that he was *too* much his *own* maſter for *her* to interfere in the matter. But when the triumvirate were retired to their own private council, the malignity of her hatred and revenge knew no bounds: yet even at this criſis her cunning got the victory over her paſſions; and to remove all future ſuſpicion ſhe ſmoothed her brow, met her victim with ſmiles, and ſuffered him to entertain her on the ſubject of his love without diſpleaſure, telling him, that though her diſlike to the Dowager Counteſs was

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unconquerable, she would endeavour to give Miss Montague, who had never offended her, such a reception, as his wife, that should leave him no cause to be dissatisfied. Miss Pledell talked of her sister elect with even less reserve and much more apparent kindness. The treacherous mother's next step was to gain the sight of a letter written by Miss Montague, which opportunity Lord Aubery, proud of her mental endowments, willingly gave her. At first she looked it slightly over, then read it more attentively, crying out, "This girl *must* certainly be *extremely* amiable; I do not remember ever to have seen a more charming letter. Allow your sister, added she, to take a copy of it for me, that whenever my old prejudices return I may know how to conjure them away by the talisman of her unaffected virtues." The request flattered his love, he obeyed her commands; and Miss Pledell retired not only to do what her mother had *desired*, but what she knew her mother *intended* should

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be done. At their next meeting ſhe gave it back to him with many warm encomiums on its merits; and theſe ingenious contrivers had the pleaſure to ſee a very maſterly proof of Miſs Pledell's knack at imitation paſs undetected, though not unperuſed, into his lordſhip's pocket-book, they having put a copy under the envelope, and detained the original for future occaſions. Sir Aſhton accompanied his friend abroad, and for many weeks no interruption was made in the correſpondence between Miſs Montague and Lord Auberry: abſolute ſilence afterwards enſued by the ſtale trick of taking up whatever was written by either party; Mrs. Pledell managing on one ſide the water, Sir Aſhton on the other. Auberry, in a ſtate of ſuſpenſe he was not able to ſupport, was about to return before he had ſcarcely entered on his travels; when, juſt in time to prevent his intentions, a letter arrives, written, as he ſuppoſed, by the fair hand of his paſſionately beloved Mary, in which ſhe aſſures

aſſures him, that though ſhe had much eſteem for him, yet as her dear grandmother was well informed of Mrs. Pledell's reluctance to their union, every former purpoſe was ſuperſeded by the reſentment ſhe naturally felt at ſeeing Lady Auberry treated with ſo little conſideration; therefore, to avoid expoſing her to further inſult, ſhe had that day received the vows of a huſband whoſe family did not think themſelves humbled by her alliance. She ſigned this by her new name of Barford, a retired man of faſhion, who Auberry had often heard reſided about twenty miles from Riverſdale. I cannot ſtay to tell you all his extravagancies on receipt of this curiouſly fabricated epiſtle, I muſt take them up at a more intereſting period; Lady Auberry, whoſe imagination is as lively as at ſixteen, will eaſily conceive them. Sir Aſhton dragged him from place to place, and from pleaſure to pleaſure, though of all that are commonly ſo called, the only one to which he ſeemed

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in the leaſt ſenſible, was the pleaſure of intoxication. In this condition theſe travellers got as far as Milan, where his lordſhip grew refractory, would proceed no further, neither mix with company, go out, or ſuffer himſelf to be ſeen, though Sir Aſhton, who was quite of another turn, threw all manner of temptations in his way, and at laſt hit on one that had its effect. A young adventureſs, who calls herſelf the Marchioneſs Felicia, and lived at Milan in a ſtyle of ſplendour which ſurpaſſed all example, was at this time much talked of, not only for her magnificence, but the doubtful mode by which it was maintained; her beauty and accompliſhments engaged the general converſation more than either or both together. She had not been long ſettled at Milan, where ſhe paſſed in the opinion of many for the miſtreſs of an old foreigner, who had purchaſed the marquiſate to gratify her haughty ſpirit, and laviſhed oceans of wealth to appeaſe the demands of her vanity. Every thing

thing Sir Aſhton heard of her charms fell ſo ſhort of what they deſerved, that he got himſelf introduced to a female friend, who paſſed for her chaperone; he ſoon made ſome intereſt in the family, and contrived that the young lady ſhould be thrown in the way of Lord Auberry—They met as if by chance—ſhe knew how to play him off—he was impreſſed by the ſeeming modeſt dignity of her demeanour, and confeſſed ſhe was divinely beautiful. Sir Aſhton had hopes—he waited on the companion, to whom he made certain propoſals in the name of his lordſhip, which were ſcornfully rejected, with ſuch mighty eulogiums on the *virtue* of her ward, that the crafty baronet was forced to accept her aſſiſtance in a way not the moſt eaſy that he could have chalked out for his friend's accommodation; but ſhe ſtill called her young charge a paragon of reſerve. He was obliged to conſent that a ſham ceremony ſhould cover thoſe ſcruples of virtuous pride which never could be conquered

quered by bribes, ſophiſtry, or even love itſelf. In conformity to the plan was the execution; Miſs Montague, faithleſs, loſt to him for ever—the Marchioneſs irreſiſtible—the confederates perfect Machiavels—Auberry *but* a man—his tender paſſions fainting, not annihilated, revived at the tender glances of approving beauty, and he ſuffered himſelf to become the captive of their devices. Whether the girl was intruſted with this fraud by her confidante, Montague is uncertain; he ſuppoſes ſhe was, and that the mock marriage was a plan concerted between them to give the little adventureſs larger claims on his bounty when he ſhould chooſe to get rid of her. The pretended ceremony was performed by a creature of the counteſs's procuring (for this companion too called herſelf a woman of quality), who, ſhe aſſured Sir Aſhton, had the honour of bearing a commiſſion in the regiment of ———, and ſo entirely devoted to her that ſhe would anſwer with her

her exiſtence for his ſilence and fidelity. In the arms of his lovely Italian Lord Auberry began to find ſome conſolation for the perfidy of his firſt love; his viſits were made with ſo much caution, that nobody ſuſpected he was known to theſe intriguing ladies. Poor Montague had gone far in the track of villany, but did not chooſe that his ſteps ſhould be purſued even by his own accomplices: he therefore wrote to the Pledells, pretending this private marriage was contracted without *his* concurrence; but added, by way of conſoling them, that ſome good conſequences were likely to enſue; it would cut off all poſſible pretenſions to his couſin when he ſhould diſcover that ſhe had entered into no new engagement, and, by leaving her without ſo powerful a protector, make his own ſucceſſion to the Montague eſtates much more practicable; beſides which, by the management of his paſſions, and playing off his hopes and his fears againſt each other, he ſhould get him ſo entirely under

under his ſubjection, as to make him join in every act of revenge they might chooſe to inflict on their inveterate foes, the haughty dowager and her ambitious granddaughter.—He tells them he has perſuaded Lord Auberry, the marriage being private, ſtill to keep it ſo, as the beſt means by which, on their return home, they might lead him into a labyrinth of perplexities, and make him do whatever they pleaſed. The lady, he added, being of a doubtful character, together with Lord Auberry's not being at liberty to chooſe for himſelf till he had completed twenty-five, by the will of the late lord—on one or other of theſe chances he had no doubt at a *proper* time they ſhould have it in their power to diſannul the fooliſh connexion: all this he told them, but not a word of the cheat that had been practiſed to a *certainty* on Auberry, and *poſſibly* on his wife. Montague permitted him to enjoy the felicity of his new ſituation but a few weeks; when thinking it time they ſhould be ſeparated,

he contrived that every diſadvantageous report that had circulated of the Marchioneſs Felicia ſhould reach the ears of Lord Auberry, with ſuch proofs of her being a miſtreſs before ſhe was a wife, as perfectly to derange his reaſon, if it ever had been ſteady ſince his firſt diſappointment. In this condition Sir Aſhton dragged him from Milan without bidding her adieu; his confidential ſervant was left behind to deliver her a note written by Auberry, whoſe hand was guided for the purpoſe: it conſiſted of theſe few words—'You are no longer my wife—the laws of my country and your own ſhall rid me of you—If you follow me, I ſwear by the great God of Heaven, the firſt moment I ſee you ſhall be the laſt of your life."—What became of her afterwards Montague does not know, but ſuppoſes ſhe is dead, or gone to her old extravagant lover, as ſhe certainly ſtole away from Milan ſoon after they quitted it. They ſtaid a ſhort time in Paris, where as ſoon as his ſenſes

were

were a little collected, Sir Aſhton introduced him to a real marchioneſs, a married woman, handſome and faſcinating, who came with him to England, and is but lately gone back with her huſband. But this was an attachment in which neither the head nor heart was conſulted; and nothing leſs than Sir Aſhton's abſolute government could have made him ſubmit to the incumbrance, faſtened on him with no other deſign, than in hopes that her powers might reſtrain him from any very deſperate violence, when he ſhould find out that Miſs Montague was not the *betrayer*, but the *betrayed*. I really can proceed no further in a buſineſs ſo full of iniquity: the ſteps by which this unfortunate victim was led to his deſtruction are too various for any pen but that of Sir Aſhton Montague, who has traced them accurately, and to whoſe manuſcript I muſt refer you for the deteſtable particulars.

In a ſeparate paper addreſſed to myſelf, and written after he had received my meſ-

ſage, he apologiſes for not being able to ſee me.—How penitent, how pathetic is this poor miſerable object!—Though my heart ſhudders at his unprecedented crimes, it melts at his ſufferings.—He has requeſted me, when I go to town, that I will call on Lord Auberry, and tell him, he owes his converſion to a letter he received from that injured friend during his confinement, the contents of which hung ſo heavily on his mind, that to get rid of them he had recourſe to reading; but no other book except the Bible falling in his way, he opened it for the firſt time in his life, and found out that he had ſtill a choice left between a bliſsful eternity and an eternity of torture.—In humble hope of the former, he has unveiled a long liſt of crimſon enormities, and given up the names of all his aſſociates, amongſt which are many that do no honour to nobility, ſome that are a blot to ſcience, and others a diſgrace to nature. I did not leave Egham till the town ſurgeons were arrived, and the operation juſt going

going to be performed.—I ſlept that night at my friend's—ſent twice to enquire how Sir Aſhton did—had the ſatisfaction to hear that he ſuffered the amputation with great fortitude, and was as well after it as could be expected. I paſſed by the door on my way to Richmond the next morning, and ſaw one of the faculty, who told me the ſymptoms were ſtill favourable;—but the return we have got to our meſſage this day is of another complexion, and great apprehenſions are entertained that the mortification is again ſhewing itſelf. If I begin any thing about the Duke and Ducheſs, I ſhall never have done.—Not quite unmixed with ſadneſs would have been our joy, had it come unalloyed by compaſſion.—So ſudden the flaſh—ſo bright the effulgence—our emotions might have been more lively, but they would have been leſs ſupportable.—Adieu, deareſt Lady Auberry, &c.

J. PETWORTH.

LETTER XII.

Mr. Lexington to Lady Auberry.

May 20, 17—

PRAY, ſaid I, is ſhe not *my* as well as *your* grand-mamma?—What vanity to ſuppoſe a letter from *you* will be more acceptable to Lady Auberry than a letter from *me!*—This is only a little matrimonial debating, my dear madam, that has juſt been paſſing in a family way. Mary and I are both ſo jealous of your favour, that it was impoſſible not to diſpute which of us ſhould firſt have the honour of appearing before you on paper.—I put her in mind of your charming lecture on *ſubmiſſion*, and how *very* obedient Miſs Beauly promiſes to be when *ſhe* is ſo fortunate as to get a huſband. I bade her go and renovate by repoſe the fire of her eyes, which the tears ſhe has ſhed for

for a penitent, I hope a pardoned, ſinner has nearly extinguiſhed.—She has a tolerable temper enough—I have no great fault to find with her—and now that ſhe is taught her duty, has yielded up the point for which we contended, and is gone out of my ſight, I ſhall, as the ladies ſay, take up my pen, and tell my dear grand-mamma all about it.

I never experienced pleaſanter days in my life, than thoſe which immediately followed my baniſhment from Riverſdale, except thoſe which I ſpent *at* Riverſdale in your Paradiſe.—Eves were multiplied; but though I was forced to leave two of them behind, I carried off *one* who contrived to make a Paradiſe for me out of the duſtieſt roads through which I have ever yet had the felicity to travel. About the cloſe of the third day, the charm vaniſhed;—my enchantreſs would not diſobey the commands of our kind but impetuous aunt.—We ſeparated; and till we met again in Bruton Street, I had no idea it could

be the *fame* world which I inhabited ſix hours before. We were met at Lady Jane's by my uncle and aunt; and here it ſeems we are to be confined cloſe priſoners till her Grace's plan is completed.—It is wonderfully whimſical all this; but I make no reſiſtance, as Mary is to be left with me, to ſee that I am taken care of.—Montague ceaſes to be the object of our cenſure, contempt, or pity.—He died a few hours after Lady Jane ſent off her laſt letter; but my adorable wife, forgetting her wrongs, weeps for what may be the conſequences of his crimes in the place where he is gone, and accuſes herſelf as the innocent cauſe of his committing them.—His family vault will cloſe up his remains on Thurſday, and my aunt has put off the declaration of our marriage for ſome days. This is a conceſſion to delicacy, and your angelic granddaughter receives it as a peculiar bounty: for my part, I do not care how or when it is declared—ſhe is my *own*, and I am ſatisfied.—Poor Auberry! the more ſenſible I

am

am of that felicity out of which he has been cheated, the more I learn to commiſerate his deſtiny, yet I am only compaſſionate by halves—I would not that his fate had been reverſed for the univerſe.—There are not *two* Maries in the world; and Auberry's happineſs would have conſigned Lexington to wretchedneſs. Lady Jane, who viſited him ſince the death of Montague, tells us, ſhe has been let into a ſecret, but is not yet at liberty to diſcloſe it—though I know by the ſmiles of my divinity, that ſhe is not *quite* ſo much in the dark as ſhe wants me to believe. "How all you dear ladies love a myſtery!" ſaid I to Lady Jane. "Give me up this, and I ſhall fill half a quire to my grand-mamma; or, if you will keep it to yourſelf, ſomebody muſt finiſh my letter, whoſe tender eloquence will give Lady Auberry no cauſe to regret that you are ſo cruel as to deny me a ſubject." Oh! here ſhe comes again! and with her ſuch a ſubſtitute as you will not be able to reject.—Her pretenſions are theſe:

A form o'er which the eyes unfated rove,
A face the ſeat of beauty, ſoul of love!
A wit corrected by the rules of ſenſe,
Inſpir'd by joy, rein'd in by diffidence.
Obtruſive never--let this ſketch ſuffice,
Or read it fuller—in her huſband's eyes.

Mrs. Lexington writes:

I have heard you, my dear grand-mamma, very often obſerve, that it is ungrateful to return a favour exactly in kind as ſoon as received.—I have but one way to avoid this awkward predicament; for, if I write on, it is impoſſible I ſhould not tell you all my ſentiments for this too partial huſband. I ſhall therefore ſatisfy myſelf with aſſuring the moſt beloved of parents, that the happieſt of all happy beings is

Her dutiful and
affectionate grand-daughter,
MARY LEXINGTON."

That

That title I diſpute with the whole world. Superlative happineſs is the fortunate lot of

Your ladyſhip's dutiful
and affectionate grand-ſon,
HENRY LEXINGTON.

LETTER XIII.

Lady Jane Petworth to Lady Auberry.

May 25, 17—.

LEXINGTON I find has been complaining to your ladyſhip, of my having a ſecret with which I would not entruſt him. —The charge is a true one, and you will ſee my reaſon for this reſerve, when I unveil the myſtery to you, as I have already done to our little council of *five*. The individuals who make up this number are eaſily aſcertained — the young peoples return, one from the continent, the other from Riverſdale, being events not underſtood out of our family circle, any more than the reſtitution made by Sir Aſhton Montague, the *laſt beſt* action of his life.— There is ſomething ſo ſacred in a requeſt iſſued from the bed of death, as makes the perform-

performance of it a debt of conſcience. It was this ſentiment that haſtened me to town the day on which that unfortunate man cloſed his diſmal account of life.—To break it as well as I could to Lord Auberry, and to deliver the meſſage with which I was intruſted, I called at his door the next morning, and aſked for the houſe-keeper — There was no houſe-keeper — Could I ſee any one of the upper ſervants?— If I would pleaſe to walk in, my lord's gentleman ſhould be told ſomebody wanted to ſpeak to him.—The urchin who ſaid this was not more than ſeven years old. I aſked him no queſtions, but, ſtepping out of the carriage, went into a parlour, bidding him go and ſend the perſon he had mentioned. During the few moments I had for obſervation, the melancholy ſilence that reigned every where—the people that I ſaw aſcending and deſcending the ſtair-caſe, paſſing and repaſſing each other with a great deal of rapid confuſion, gave me reaſon to ſuppoſe I came too late on my embaſſy, and that Lord Auberry, who has long been ill,

ill, was either dead or dying.—This idea was conſiderably ſtrengthened, when a decent-looking elderly man ruſhed into the room and cried out, "We do not know what more can be done; if you are a chriſtian, for God's ſake come and help us."—His ſobs were ſo vehement, that in vain I aſked him what was the matter?—He had ſaid all of which his voice was capable, and I followed nearly as much diſconcerted as himſelf.—The excruciating ſcreams of a female alarmed me ſtill more as I got about the middle of the ſtairs.—As ſoon as we had gained the top, turning a little to the right, my agitated conductor puſhed open a door, and I entered a handſome apartment, where I expected to have found the remains of Lord Auberry, and thought that the ſcreams I had heard, but heard no longer, proceeded from ſome of his attendants at the moment he expired.—But, good God! what a ſcene preſented itſelf! The moſt beautiful young creature my eyes ever beheld lay extended on the floor—her clothes,

clothes, though clean, ſo very coarſe, ſo perfectly diſguiſing, that exquiſite lovelineſs like her own could only have penetrated through them—her head, like a lily broken from its ſtalk, reſted on the knees of a woman, who had thrown herſelf down by her ſide—Many more ſtood or knelt round her, ſome holding down her feet, others her hands; and I ſaw, when ſhe recovered from the fainting into which ſhe had fallen, that there was not one too many, the violence of her exertions being beyond all credibility.—The perſon who came in with me (hearing orders to call immediate medical aſſiſtance) drew me from the reſt, and, claſping his hands, entreated I would ſuſpend my commands, for that his dear lady would rather die than be ſeen by any body.—"*Your Lady?*" repeated I: "merciful God! can this wretched ſufferer be Lady Auberry?"—"Oh! madam," cried he with increaſed conſternation, "my grief has betrayed me—If you have no compaſſion—if you have not ſecrecy, we are all undone!"

undone!"—"Fear nothing," I replied; "I will take the conduct of this matter on myſelf." I did not ſtay to hear what he would ſay, but ran down ſtairs and ſent one of my ſervants to my own apothecary, to bring him immediately. I afterwards returned to the chamber, leaving directions to be called down as ſoon as he came.—I took advantage of the next fit of inſenſibility that aſſailed her, having ſent the male attendant out of the way, partly to tear and partly to cut off the garb in which ſhe had concealed her quality; and laying her in bed, after two or three more convulſions, every one of which exhauſted the ſtrength of her nature, and added to the length of the faintings, ſhe at laſt fell into a ſtate of ſtupor, ſomething between life and death, for it could not be properly called either. The woman who ſeemed the moſt intereſted about her, who held her head on her lap when I came in, ſtill ſat by the bedſide:—ſhe was as meanly clad as the reſt; and I ſhould not perhaps have taken particular

ticular notice of her, but for the extravagancy of her ſorrow, and the marked ſilence ſhe preſerved in the midſt of it.—I ſlid out of the room to be ready for Mr. Bellerton when he came, and will confeſs I had a ſiniſter view in withdrawing, for I wanted a fuller explanation than my informer had yet entered into.—I found him on his knees outſide the door of his lady's apartment.—I prevailed on him to go down with me—He had ſaid *too* much not to entruſt me with the whole, and this was the reſult of his intelligence :—

He had lived with Lord Auberry from the time of his birth, and always enjoyed his confidence, though unknown to Sir Aſhton Montague.—He gave a ſhort account of his lord's violent attachment for your grand-daughter, and a very pathetic one of what he ſuffered whilſt he ſuppoſed her unfaithful.—He went on to ſpeak of his own joy when the young marchioneſs Felicia fell in the way of his lord at Milan, and ſaw that he was greatly enamoured

of

of her.—He ſpoke with devotion of Lady Auberry, and with reverence of her companion Madam Mellifonte, who had ſo far honoured him with her confidence, as to let him into Sir Aſhton's abominable ſcheme of impoſing a falſe marriage on the innocent young creature, which ſhe had ſeemed to favour in pity to the deſtined victim, whoſe affections were entirely devoted to her lover; and this ſhe did without letting her know the wickedneſs of Sir Aſhton's intentions, Lord Auberry being entirely ignorant of them.—Inſtead of procuring a military man to perſonate a prieſt, as was propoſed, ſhe contrived the ceremony ſhould be performed by Leviſs, who had taken holy orders in one of our univerſities, to make the engagement more binding, both parties being proteſtants. The perſon to whom I owe this intereſting little hiſtory was left behind at Milan, to deliver Lord Auberry's cruel billet to his unfortunate wife, which almoſt drove her to diſtraction.—She proteſted her innocence in

agonies

agonies that left the poor friendly-hearted fellow no poſſibility to doubt the truth of her aſſertions; and it was by his advice that both the ladies came to this country and concealed themſelves in London, where he informed them of every ſtep taken by his lord—of his former attachment to Miſs Montague—of his renewed paſſion for her—of the pains taken to ſet aſide the marriage—in ſhort, of every thing that was going forward: — he then mentioned her viſit to the Ducheſs of Cleveland, to find out if her huſband had really renewed his addreſſes to Miſs Montague, and ſaid that ſhe came away diſſatisfied—That another time her curioſity was ſo great to ſee this rival, ſhe had advertiſed twenty guineas for a ticket of admittance to the maſquerade, where they met; and ever ſince ſhe had expreſſed ſuch an affection for her, that ſhe would have ſacrificed any thing but her claims on Lord Auberry to her predilection for Miſs Montague. Except on theſe two occaſions, neither of the ladies, who had changed

changed their names, ever left the ſmall lodging he had procured for them in Welbeck Street, till, on Lord Auberry's being taken ill ſome weeks ago, his lady, who was of a diſpoſition not to be oppoſed, inſiſted on his introducing her as his ſiſter, whom he had ſent for from the country to attend him in his ſickneſs; and her ladyſhip being in the ſeventh month of her pregnancy, the counteſs thought it was proper that ſhe ſhould be indulged.—I was not much ſurpriſed at this part of his hiſtory, as I had perceived her ſituation before I heard him declare it. I aſked if Lord Auberry had never ſeemed to recollect her through all her diſguiſe? He ſaid, No; the former part of his illneſs was ſo ſevere, and he was ſo often light-headed, he believed he had never known one face from another of thoſe who were about him. He was going to enlarge on the cauſe of her preſent dangerous ſituation, when Mr. Bellerton came in, whom I carried immediately to the ſick chamber, telling him as

we

we went along, that a young creature for whom I entertained a ſingular regard, having contracted a ſecret marriage eight months ago, had fled from her friends, and concealed herſelf in the houſehold of Lord Auberry; that I had juſt found her in a terrible ſituation, which made me ſend for him, in whoſe ſkill, care, and ſecrecy, I could repoſe my truſt. He promiſed me every thing I could deſire, and we entered together—We found her tolerably compoſed, but next to inſenſible.—The ſame woman whom I have mentioned before, and now knew to be Madame Mellifonte, who, diſguiſed like a ſervant, had that morning come to ſee her, was ſtill ſitting by her bed-ſide, holding her hands and weeping over them.—I would have ſaid ſomething to comfort her, but was prevented by the engagement into which I had entered, not to betray that I knew any thing of the matter.—At firſt we apprehended a premature birth, but our fears ſoon gave way

way to better hopes.—Before I went out of the houſe I informed my informer of Sir Aſhton's death, and the intentions with which I came there.—He told me Lord Auberry was then well enough to receive my viſit—and he had been recovering ſo faſt for the three laſt days, that his lady, except when he was aſleep, durſt not venture into his chamber for fear of being diſcovered; which baniſhment, together with the dread of ſoon being entirely diſmiſſed from attending him, had preyed violently on her ſpirits, and at laſt reduced her to the ſtate in which I firſt ſaw her.—I bade him conduct me to Lord Auberry.—Our interview was of conſiderable length.—I ſaw him the next day, and the day following.—I ſhould be a fool to tell you all that paſſed on theſe occaſions, when in a few ſhort days you may expect a verbal detail of circumſtances. Till then I have only to ſay, that Lord Auberry is convinced of his injuſtice to two of the moſt lovely as

well as amiable women in the world—that his former paſſion for your grand-daughter is converted into brotherly eſteem—that he adores his now happy wife—that they are never aſunder—that the marriage is avowed—and that to-morrow the dear Lexingtons are to ſteal out from their hiding-place to look in upon the reconciled pair, and aſſure the penitent Auberry of their forgiveneſs, without which his happineſs would be ſtill incomplete. The Duke and Ducheſs have no objection to their making this generous and charitable viſit; but it is to be conducted with great privacy, and her Grace wiſhes to have them at her ball, which I take to be one of the few impracticabilities that will not yield to her exertions —both Lord and Lady Auberry being reduced to ſo great a ſtate of weakneſs, that for my own part I can hardly yet think their lives quite out of danger.—I have promiſed to meet her Grace in Groſvenor Square at three—It is within ten minutes

of

of the time—I can therefore only add, God bleſs you, dear Lady Auberry, and farewell!

J. PETWORTH.

LET-

LETTER XIV.

Mrs. Lexington to the Dowager Counteſs of Auberry.

May 30, 17—.

ANOTHER week and we are on our road to Riverſdale! Are you prepared, deareſt grandmamma, for the inundation of friends we ſhall bring with us to be your gueſts for ſome months at leaſt—the Duke, the Ducheſs, Lady Jane?—have you room for us all?—Oh good God! how honoured and how happy is your Mary!—There are others that have promiſed to join our party in the courſe of the ſummer, to whom I know your doors and your heart will be open—you muſt bid them welcome—if for no other reaſon, yet for the ſake of that lovely creature who is now the declared wife of Lord Auberry. My dear

Miſs Beauly will not only forgive, but look kindly on him—Lady Jane has ſet her the example—Lady Auberry pleads for him—and who can reſiſt her pleadings? Had he no penitence of his own, it ſeems as if Heaven might accept *her* ſorrows as an atonement for his *faults*. But indeed his penitence has nearly coſt him his life; and it is only ſince he has been aſſured by the kindeſt, the beſt beloved of huſbands, and by your Mary, they both pardon his errors and rejoice in his felicity, that he has thrown off the load of ſelf-conviction by which he has been long and heavily oppreſſed. The predilection I felt for Lady Auberry, when I only heard the ſweet tones of her voice, is converted into affection—now that I have ſeen her matchleſs form, her animated beautiful countenance, that I have been told all her ſufferings, that I have received her grateful careſſes, and know that I am dear to her. Madame Mellefonte is alſo a charming woman, and is to remain with Lord and Lady

Lady Auberry—ſo that when you ſee one you will ſee all of them. Yeſterday was our grand gala; and notwithſtanding I ſhall ſee you ſo ſoon, yet I am inclined to give you a ſketch of it—

The Ducheſs of Cleveland in continuation.

No, madam, that is impoſſible, ſhe will not give you ſo good a repreſentation of that affair as I ſhall do—So I have ſent her out in Lexington's curricle, that he might enjoy the exultation belonging to him for the goodneſs of his choice, and I the opportunity of adding a few lines to her letter. The people I collected together at my houſe laſt night owe me no obligation—it was not their gratification I conſulted—all that I had in view for them was the completeſt mortification I could deviſe for their impertinent airs, envy, and ill-nature—How I ſucceeded two or three inſtances will ſerve to explain—It was conſiſtent with my plan that I ſhould at firſt appear to treat your grand-daughter with very little conſideration, and I make no

apology to your ladyſhip, becauſe you may be ſure I did not mean to diſgrace her. I bade Lexington ſhew himſelf at nine, and to look as well as he could; but my niece I would not permit to join the party till twelve, and then not to flaſh upon us in bridal ſmiles and bridal attire: on the contrary, I deſired ſhe would make her *entrée* under the auſpices of Lady Jane Petworth, as a gueſt of courteſy rather than as one who was there by invitation, and dreſſed with the plainneſs that ſuited her ſuppoſed humble condition. Would you believe it, madam, the fooliſh boy did not make his appearance for more than an hour after the time I had appointed him? —Before he was announced my rooms were ſtuffed even to ſuffocation—ſome of my viſitors had queſtioned me about Miſs Montague's preſent ſituation, and would have been mighty witty, if I had not ſtopped them by ſaying in an offended accent, that I did not like to be tormented with names I was glad to have changed.

I knew

I knew no Miſs Montague now; for ſhe had condeſcended, at my inſtigation, to be content with another.—This paſſed very well, and gained me a great deal of credit. I mentioned my nephew's return, and told his ſiſters drily, that I ſuppoſed he meant to ſelect a wife from my aſſembly, as he was taking a vaſt deal of pains, I concluded, from the length of time he occupied at his toilet. They were much miffed that he had not called on them; but I bade them lay aſide their airs, and not expect the ſame devoirs from their brother they might think themſelves entitled to from their lovers. The moment it was known he was come back, together with the hint I had dropped of an approaching election, all the girls began putting themſelves into attitudes of attraction, playing a thouſand monkey tricks with their features to ſet them in order, every ſilly mother looking towards her own black ſwan for a future Ducheſs of Cleveland. You muſt excuſe my vanity, madam, if I

tell you that Lexington would this night have been an apology for making them all coquettes, had they not been ſuch before, from example, education, and habit. I do not mean all neither; for I had contrived to mix with the declared foes of your grand-daughter's beauty and merit a dozen young people of her own ſex, who are good like herſelf, and had been warmly her friends when the tide of faſhion ran full againſt her. Henry had no trouble in looking out for partners: he knew I had choſen them for him, and he ſtood at the head of the ſet, with Lady Bell Langton. Her mother, who is not a woman of *many* words, but *much* deſign, when the young people were all engaged, obſerved they were a *charming* couple, and ſaid ſo much about them, that ſeeming to catch at the bait, without abſolutely ſaying Madam, I underſtand you, I brought her at laſt to make downright propoſals—Out it came, and I could hardly keep up the grave farce, when ſhe told me Lord Warford,

ford, the Marquis of Battledore's ſon, had that very day ſolicited her father's approbation; but the cunning Marchioneſs hoped he would be refuſed, as ſhe was ſure poor Lady Bell had been long ſenſible of Mr. Lexington's perfections. She was not ſingular in her addreſs—the Ducheſs of Northington, Lady Dawn, and ſome other provident matrons, for whoſe daughters I had provided in rotation the hero of the night, paid me great court—and if they were not quite ſo explicit as Lady ——, their meaning was equally obvious. At length Lady Jane Petworth was announced, and your pretty unadorned Mary ſtole in after her without any name at all—The third dance was juſt ended, and every body at leiſure to teſtify their aſtoniſhment at this poor little nobody's intruſion; but I kept them in ſuch tolerable order as confined their impertinence within the limits of eyes, geſtures, and glances, by the ſeeming *hauteur* with which I received Lady Jane, and the very ſmall notice I took of

her companion, who modeſtly ſat herſelf down in a corner. When her enemies ſaw that ſhe was neglected by the Duke, myſelf, and even the perſon with whom ſhe came, the ſpite that was before mounting into ſome of their fair faces quickly ſubſided, and none of them would have turned that way if the looks of her huſband had not directed them—his tender and frequent glances no doubt made them fear he was in danger of relapſing into his former weakneſs. I was afraid he would have betrayed all by his indiſcretion—but on the whole he did pretty well, and ſupported his part with a good grace till the critical moment arrived. The ſupper rooms were to be opened at one o'clock—it was within five minutes of the time. Lexington's partners were all ſo fond of him that he was quite encircled by them; but his eyes were conſtantly turned to the door, through which his wife had vaniſhed half an hour before—and at this moment re-entered, led by the Duke—her plain muſlin dreſs exchanged

changed for one that I had provided, ſo ſplendid and becoming, that her appearance was not merely beautiful—it was a conſtellation of beauties.—Lexington flew to meet them: with a bent knee, he gracefully intreated to have that dear wife reſtored to him from whom he had been forced to eſtrange himſelf ſo many ages.—It was now time for me to throw off the maſk—"Some apology (ſaid I) may be neceſſary both to you and Mrs. Lexington—but why ſhould I take the trouble of making one, ſince we live in a happy age of freedom, where chicane and invention of any ſort that can part lovers and their miſtreſſes, huſbands and their wives, are abundantly tolerated?" Theſe few words, and the preſentation of my niece to the company, had an extraordinary effect.—One might almoſt ſuppoſe they infected the generality of my viſitors with a deſpair that was epidemical — ſo many of them were ſeized with ſudden indiſpoſition, that our ſupper party was thinned of half

thoſe who were expected to ſtay. You will think me a ſatiriſt. I ſhall ſhew you that I can alſo be a moraliſt, and finiſh my letter by obſerving, that envy is an ill-contrived vice, made up of meanneſs and malice: it wiſhes the force of goodneſs reſtrained, and the meaſure of happineſs abated: it laments over proſperity, and ſickens at health. Confeſs, madam, this is pretty good reaſoning for a Ducheſs. I aſk a place in your eſteem, and hope you will conſider my deſire to poſſeſs it, as ſome proof of the pains I ſhall take to deſerve it.

I have the honour to be

B. CLEVELAND.

THE END.

AN

ALLEGORY.

I SING a female thieviſh brood,
In theſe bleſs'd days ſcarce underſtood,
So let us call them over;
Lean *Envy*, born before her time,
Pert *Malice*, ever in her prime,
Le bel eſprit and rover.

Youngeſt, and deareſt child of ſin
Was *Falſehood* nam'd; through thick and thin
'Twas ſtrange how ſhe would amble;
How with her *ſiſters* daſh away,
When lur'd by ſcent of food, or prey,
And call it but a ramble.

Theſe *ſiſters* three had wealth in ſtore,
Had hirelings, friends, and ſlaves galore,
And yet were not contented;
But filch'd from every *better* name
Whatever added to its fame,
Nor of the theft repented.

They pitch'd their tents on *Honour's* plain,
And rummag'd o'er her fair domain,
Her ſmooth green carpets fretting;
Tore down her fences, pluck'd her flow'rs,
And levell'd all her ſhady bow'rs,
From riſing ſun to ſetting.

Hymen in youth had knit the bands,
And join'd the willing hearts and hands
Of *Fortitude* and *Honour*;
Holy *Religion* was their prieſt,
Whoſe bleſſing gave the nuptial zeſt;
No rule ſhe took upon her.

Their friends were few, their houſehold ſmall,
Of lacqueys they had none at all,
Meekneſs was her attendant;
And *Fortitude* himſelf did wait
On his own wants, in eaſe or ſtate,
Of all elſe independant.

Now

Now *Honour* was a female born,
And female tempers will be worn,
Whether from earth or heaven;
So *Honour*, tho' of heavenly race,
Would often ſhew a cloudy face,
And temper not quite even.

Unruffled ſhe could never ſee
The baſe, deſpoiling *Siſters* three
For ever round her haunting;
Before her face, behind her back,
Exhibiting their thieviſh knack,
And all her goods disjointing.

So puſh'd, ſo worried, ſhe ſpoke high,
Nay, brought ſearch warrants from the ſky,
To make them reſurrender
What from her premiſes ſhe'd loſt;
A verdict gain'd of ſuit and coſt,
Yet ſtill they would offend her.

Once on a time, *Honour* begun
To ſpin a web, nor ſtopp'd till done,
Uncommon was its merit;
'Twas ſoft, and ſmooth, as flowing rills,
And whiter than the Alpine hills,
Of purity the ſpirit.

This

This perfect work the *Sifters* vex'd,
Their brains were very much perplex'd,
How to poſſeſs the treaſure;
Dame *Honour* wore it next her heart,
And how the dame and web to part
Aſk'd a *determin'd* meaſure.

Day after day, weeks, months, and more,
They try'd their booty to ſecure,
And at the laſt ſucceeded;
Force would not do, *Fraud* mark'd the way—
This envy'd web was made their prey,
Fraud's help they only needed.

Now having ſeiz'd the darling prize,
So dear to *Honour's* ſacred eyes,
But to their own offending;
Amongſt themſelves, and learned *clan*,
Much ſtrength of argument began,
This was the point contending:

Whether 'twere better to be gone,
And ſo with *Honour* to have done,
Decamping with their plunder;
Or ſtay awhile, and brave it out?
The firſt was thought the beſt *ſans* doubt,
The laſt might prove a blunder.

Of

Of common buffets not afraid,
By little dangers not diſmay'd,
Yet now by fear infected;
They pant with guilt, they look around,
Scan ev'ry inch of *Honour's* ground,
And dread to be detected.

Off, off in haſte! begone! they ſay,
Exulting bear our prize away!
On *Envy's* back they bind it;
Cries *Malice*, If we ſhould be caught,
Nay, to the bar of Heaven be brought,
I'll find the means to hide it.

Her ſiſter *Falſehood* roundly ſwore,
Honour ſhould *never* ſee it more,
Tho' ſhe were forced to eat it;
The precious prize they bore away,
The Muſe who ſaw their wings diſplay,
Now bluſhes to repeat it.

When *Terror* counſel'd them to flight,
As their own deeds dark was the night,
Could *Conſcience* more deſire?
'Twas dark as we are told is hell,
Where all the ſons of darkneſs dwell,
With their moſt ancient ſire.

This darkneſs but increas'd their fright,
They wiſh'd to have a little light,
  Merely for what they wanted;
A light, that only they might ſee—
And trembled like an aſpen tree,
  Becauſe it was not granted.

At ev'ry ſound that meets their ear,
They cry, 'Tis *Honour* in our rear!
  Wiſhing the earth to open;
Now pauſe—now liſten—now proceed—
Then daſhing on with mended ſpeed,
  Forget what they had ſpoken.

What *Honour* ſaid, and how ſhe ſtood
Leaning her head on *Fortitude*,
  Is not to be related;
Or how, about *Religion* hung,
Catching bleſt accents from his tongue,
  Till her deſpair abated.

The weeping circle let us leave,
For ſore Religion's ſelf did grieve,
  And ſore the theft lamented;
The thieviſh *ſiſters* to convey,
A long uncomfortable way,
  The Muſe muſt be contented.

As o'er creation's wilds they ſteer,
Rocks, quickſands, mountains diſappear,
At leaſt they could not ſee them;
But tho' ſo comfortably dark,
No paſſenger their ſteps could mark,
From fears it did not free them.

Through pitchy clouds they grope their way,
Expect, yet dread, the morning ray,
As hopes or fears infect them;
What moſt they wiſh they moſt would ſhun,
By day-light they might be undone,
Yet day-light muſt direct them.

Alternate ſway'd by hope and fear,
They travers'd through the trackleſs air,
Till *Morn*, who had been ſleeping,
Wak'd by the crowing of the cocks,
Op'd her grey eyes, ſhook her moiſt locks,
And at her door ſtood peeping.

They aſk'd her, which way they ſhould take;
But ſhe was not enough awake
To give them a direction;
Yet, as ſhe look'd them in the face,
She ſhot a glance—'twas not of grace,
But caſt a deep reflection.

Where'er

Where'er it fell, on churches, ſpires,
It ſhone with gold and purple fires,
All earthly objects clearing;
London they ſaw beneath them ſtand;
The *Siſters*, joining hand-in-hand,
Bear down, no danger fearing.

They lighted near that famous horſe
Which ſo much notice does engroſs,
Becauſe a fellow idle
Seal'd his own doom, having forgot,
I can't exactly tell you what,
'Twas ſtirrup, girth, or bridle.

Of lady friends a ſwarm they meet,
From Charing Croſs to Harley Street,
Who aſk them to their houſes;
Bragging how well they'll be receiv'd,
And their commandments all obey'd,
By them and by their ſpouſes.

Their daughters too would be ſo glad,
They almoſt would with joy run mad,
Such worthy friends poſſeſſing;
Vow'd no apology they'd take,
If only for their daughter's ſake,
Who'd think their ſight a bleſſing.

Envy

Envy uncurl'd her *little* noſe,
Would wait upon them when they choſe—
So *Malice* ſaid, half grinning;
For once the truth ſly *Falſehood* ſpoke,
Whiſpering ſhe cry'd, A civil joke!
We owe it to our ſinning.

How warm the matron's boſoms glow'd!
What fervent praiſes they beſtow'd,
Unlike to modern kindneſs!
With animated fervour given,
Had they ſuch praiſe addreſs'd to Heaven,
Who'd tax them with ſupineneſs?

The trav'llers, having flown expreſs,
Were now for hurrying home to dreſs;
Their friends, in phraſes hearty,
Beſought, with love-inſpired face,
That they would condeſcend to grace
A little private party.

The *Siſters* thought, then better thought,
And many weighty reaſons brought,
Why they declin'd the honour;
Unfortunate that they ſhould be
Engag'd that night to Lady C——,
They muſt look in upon her—

From

From thence to Lady N——, ſhould go,
To Lady D——, an hour or ſo,
Or much they ſhould offend them;
On Ladies F—— and E—— muſt call,
For to her Grace of H——'s ball
They'd promis'd to attend them.

Next morning half the belles in town
Stopp'd at their door, were there ſet down,
Females of all dimenſions;
Some learn'd, ſome witty, few of ſenſe,
Some that to beauty had pretence,
And ſome with no pretenſions.

Unceaſingly the knocker fell,
To call out *Cunning* from his cell,
A porter of low meaſure;
Exceeding civil to the great,
But little people made to wait
Upon his utmoſt leiſure.

To eaſe the *Siſters* prone to fear,
Starting at ſhadows, if too near,
A ſturdy guard was ſentry'd,
That gueſts forbidden might not call,
Suſpicion ſtood within his hall,
To ſearch them as they enter'd.

He

He let the females all go by,
A paſſport ſhone in ev'ry eye,
Of their moſt civil meaning;
Tall *Vanity* walk'd on before,
Announc'd them juſt within the door,
They found her entertaining.

But when, allur'd by ſtronger charms,
They ruſh into the *Siſters'* arms,
Oh! 'twas the bliſs of bliſſes;
To Ladies I——, E——, O—— and U——,
To Mrs. P—— and Miſtreſs Q——,
And half a hundred miſſes.

A moment longer, *Honour*, dwell,
Within thy captivating cell,
I've not yet done with ſinners;
But when my Muſe has ſpoke their part,
She'll plaud the dictates of thy heart,
And tell us who are *winners*.

What tho' thy foes have found a place
Where ſeldom you can ſhew your face;
What tho' vaſt ſums they ſquander
Of *truth*—of *honeſty*—of *ſenſe*,
And thus *your* property diſpenſe,
She'll never keep you under!

'Tis

'Tis rather difficult, I own,
To ſtill the rage we both have known,
And both from the ſame ſources;
I prove this adage every day,
That good and bad will have their way,
Nor can we ſtop their courſes.

With moraliſing, Muſe, have done,
And finiſh what you firſt begun,
Return to *Envy's* dwelling;
Say who comes in, and who goes out,
Say, what the ladies are about,
How each is each excelling.

Is it in converſe ſage they vie?
Or, who's the beſt muſician try?
Or, for good works contending?
Wide of the mark! my Muſe replies,
They're hatching ſcandal, telling lies
With vigour never-ending!

Give us a ſpecimen, I pray,
Of how they look—and what they ſay,
You've got them altogether;
'Hold!' ſhe retorts, 'misjudging bard,
'Compel me not, the taſk is hard,
'They're too much of a feather.'

I aſk'd

I aſk'd her if there were no men?
She anſwer'd, Only nine or ten,
To ladies full five hundred;
I bid her count them o'er again,
Five hundred women! ſo few men?
Why, ſure, you muſt have blunder'd!

She ſweetly ſmil'd, and thus reply'd:
'Let doubt and wonder both ſubſide,
'For know,' and ſpoke it hearty—
'To one *malicious* man a ſcore
'Of *honeſt* men I'll bring, and more,
'That are of *Honour's* party.'

Go on, I cry—She thus began:
'The ſilence was not broke by man,
'Where women were ſo plenty;
'Their words ſo numerous, and ſmart,
'I can't repeat a quarter part,
'Perhaps, not one in twenty.

'Dear creatures! have you been at Court?
'You've heard the wonderful report?
'Pray is my lord no better?
'How long may you have been in town?
'They ſay, St. Paul's will tumble down.
'I hope you got my letter?

'I been at Court!—Indeed not I!
'The Queen to us is mighty ſhy,
'This was by *Malice* ſpoken;
'When *Falſehood* was preſented there,
'Her Majeſty behav'd ſo queer,
'Of confidence no token!

'Said *Envy*, pulling up her chin,
'The drawing-room will be but thin,
'If clos'd on *our* connections;
'If we ſo coldly are receiv'd,
'And nothing that we ſay believ'd,
'Adieu to Court protections!

'Here for a moment chang'd the ſcene;
'A moment's breathing time, between
'That converſe ever flowing,
'Is ſeldom found, tho' very meet,
'For making out the ſenſe complete,
'And much of grace beſtowing.

'A female figure ſhew'd her face,
'As much at leaſt as gauze, and lace,
'Patches, and paint, would let her;
'The ladies roſe and bent their knee,
'No object but herſelf they ſee,
'So much ſhe look'd their better.

'On

On *Envy's* lips there ſat a ſneer,
And *Malice* cry'd, How came you here?
The ladies ſtood confounded;
Madam, I thought your bell had rung,
She anſwer'd, with a liſping tongue,
Indeed I thought it ſqunded.

You thought? And who bids ſervants think?
Said *Falſehood*, as ſhe tipp'd the wink,
To mark their friend's confuſion;
And many compliments ſhe paid,
That might excuſe her waiting-maid
For her undue intruſion.

Nay, no apology, for ſhame!
They all cry out, for ſure ſhe came
From the moſt poliſh'd nation;
I hope, ſaid *Malice*, you'll not ſcorn
The girl becauſe ſhe's Britiſh born,
Her name is *Affectation*.

Then one and all they bid her ſtay,
You muſt not, ſhall not, go away,
We every one require
A touch of thy celeſtial ſkill,
Our boſoms with thy eſſence fill
High as thy own, or higher!

Malice on *Envy's* ſlipper trod,
And caſt a kind, approving nod
On *Affectation*, ſlily;
That ſort of nod as if to ſay,
Pr'ythee the ſilly ſouls obey,
'Twill entertain *us* highly.

The truſty Abigail obey'd,
Call'd Art and Labour to her aid,
Outdid her own outdoings;
Rais'd up an altar to her fame,
And proudly grafted her own name
On Nature's humbled ruins.

And firſt, ſhe took away all eaſe,
By tightly pulling in their ſtays,
So tight, that twenty laces
It coſt her to complete the job,
Whilſt, ty'd up to an iron rod,
Her victims made wry faces.

This done, ſhe would their necks adorn,
Begging they'd throw a little ſcorn,
To mingle with their ſweetneſs;
Hop'd they'd believe what now ſhe ſaid,
That all allow'd a toſſing head
More ſtriking far than meekneſs.

Like

Like Bacchanalians half ſeas o'er,
From very ecſtaſy they roar,
In praiſe of her inventions;
They bid her do juſt what ſhe will,
They neither doubt her taſte or ſkill,
Or her moſt kind intentions.

She liſp'd her thanks, again begun,
Bruſh'd up their eyes, their heads new ſtrung,
Inſtructed them in talking,
Put on their feathers, and their paint,
Appointed times to laugh, or faint,
With attitudes for walking.

And next, like parrots they were taught
A ſtring of words to ſay by rote:—
So work'd the artful gipſy,
That, in her fetters ſafely bound,
The happy ladies look'd around,
And thought each other tipſy.

But for themſelves, they had no eyes
To ſee the monſtrous diſguiſe
To which they had ſubmitted;
Each ſaw it miſbecame her friend,
Wonder'd why ſhe did not amend,
And have *her* garb refitted.—

Suſpicion's voice, and ſomewhat loud,
Now reach'd the gay, delighted crowd,
And ſtopp'd their mighty chatter;
Falſehood on tiptoe ſkipp'd about,
Her nerves diſorder'd by the ſhout,
She gueſs'd the very matter.

Envy and *Malice*, hand in hand,
Stepp'd out the reaſon to demand
Of all this wild confuſion:
Ever their thieviſh pranks in view,
They heard a ſound that pierc'd them through
With dread of foes' intruſion.

You're drunk, gone mad! pale *Malice* cries;
Suſpicion glar'd his ſquinting eyes
In manner not quite pleaſing!
Madam, why all this rage to me?
There is a traitor ta'en, d'ye ſee,
Whoſe preſence might be teaſing.

She look'd again, and ſaw he ſtood
In a Mendoza attitude,
A mighty blow ſuſpended,
Which kept at bay a lovely youth,
Candour, the eldeſt ſon of *Truth*,
By *Honeſty* attended.

Malice,

Malice, before as pale as death,
Scarce able now to draw her breath,
Became as red as fury.

Envy was ſwallow'd up in grief,
Foreſaw nor mercy nor relief,
Aſk'd *Cunning* to protect her;
He lock'd, then barr'd and chain'd the door,
Back to the group his lady bore,
And dubb'd himſelf her Hector.

The female gueſts round *Envy* hung,
The men to dearer *Falſehood* clung,
Held her from fainting tightly;
Coax'd her to ſpeak, and bravely ſwore
They'd loſe their precious ſouls, and more,
Rather than leave her lightly.—

Cunning of *Honour* nothing knew,
Locks, bolts, and chains, all open flew,
At the celeſtial order;
A tiar of ſuns adorn'd her head,
Her limbs a ſnow white robe betray'd,
Trimm'd with an azure border.

Caution, with number'd ſteps, and ſlow,
Like waters deep, that ſilent flow,
Walk'd ſmoothly on before her;
Caution by *Wiſdom* is approv'd,
But not by *Folly's* children lov'd,
They never could endure her.

The decent dame had made her bows,
Great *Perſeverance* was her ſpouſe,
With ſoul of goodly mettle;
He wore a full determin'd look,
And for his ſhield this motto took,
"Settled——not to un-ſettle."

Stern *Fortitude* had gone before,
And burſt the lock of every door,
Tho' *Cunning* oft had boaſted
The wards of all his patent keys
Were turn'd ſo many *curious* ways,
If travers'd—he'd be roaſted!

And long againſt all force they ſtood:
But now they yield to *Fortitude*,
Back'd by his dear wife *Honour*,
From whom he ſeldom takes his eyes,
At every door that open flies
He turns and looks upon her.

Tho'

Tho' married long, ſhe ſeems a bride,
Was by *Religion* deified,
He had all goodneſs taught her;
The happy pair ſo well he lov'd,
So much their harmleſs lives approv'd,
He call'd them ſon and daughter.

It always was his poſt to ſtand
On *Honour's* honourable hand,
Her left arm *Faith* ſupported;
Faith was a loving, holy dame,
Who for *Religion* own'd a flame,
From infancy they courted.

Before theſe three did ſlowly walk,
Or rather like a ſpirit ſtalk,
'Twas neither ſhade nor matter,
At leaſt that any one could know—
Cover'd it was from head to toe,
It ſpoke not, nor did chatter.

Nor limb, nor feature was reveal'd,
So cloſe the myſtery lay conceal'd
Beneath a web ſo woven,
That man, or beaſt, it might have been,
Angel, or devil, nought was ſeen
Of wings, or foot that's cloven.

It ſeem'd to *Honour* very dear,
She ſhew'd about it as much care
As dames who young ones tutor;
Faith bade it lift its thoughts above,
Religion taught it heav'nly love,
And pointed to the future.

Next *Juſtice* came: he ſought to tread
The print that *Honour's* feet had made,
Honour had borne and bred him;
Now, tho' immortal, he was blind,
And never could thoſe traces find
If *Mercy* had not led him.

His emblematic robe portray'd,
In many a deep and ſanguine ſhade,
The terrors of his calling,
Too terrible for mortal ſight,
But for the drapery of white
Round *Mercy* graceful falling.

When ſun-beams on foul waters play,
All ſtains appear as waſh'd away;
So *Mercy's* garb, reflecting
On *Juſtice'* ſanguinary coat,
A wondrous alteration wrought,
Its horrors half ejecting.

The ſcales of Heaven he even bore,
And on his flaming breaſt-plate wore,
In red, that blood ſurpaſſes,
"My power's from high!" in words ſo plain,
As might from pole to pole be ſeen
Without the aid of glaſſes.

Truth bore his ſword: ſo bright it ſhone,
That, dazzling like the mid-day ſun,
It ſeem'd a burning mirror;
At once it pointed ev'ry way,
Around its edge blue lightnings play,
And flaſh inceſſant terror!

Such the *High Juſtice* of the ſkies,
At *Honour*'s call he downward flies
To ward her reſtitution;
His train with hers united blend,
And kindly look as friend on friend,
Expecting retribution.

Obſervation trod with care,
Unſeal'd his eye, unclos'd his ear,
In duſky mantle hidden;
A never-dying torch he bore,
All mental ſecrets to explore,
To common ſight forbidden.

Silence ſtood ever at his ſide,
By blood and friendſhip both ally'd,
He was his own twin brother;
His robe was of a darker ſhade,
His finger on his lips was laid,
And mark'd him from the other.

The ſweeteſt, and the lovelieſt pair
That *Honour's* ſuite did grace, were there,
Nam'd *Modeſty* and *Meekneſs*;
Nor could their garments be outdone
By ſnow that glitters in the ſun,
For purity and ſleekneſs.

White-handed *Hope*, with dimpled cheek,
Attended on her ſiſters meek,
In *Wiſdom's* view they ſported;
And ever and anon they ſpy,
To catch a mandate from his eye,
Whoſe patronage they courted.

Wiſdom with *Juſtice* had come down
As pleading counſel for the crown,
Ere ſentence might be given,
Or *Honour* gain a full decree
Againſt the thieviſh *Siſters* three—
Such the award of Heaven!

This

This counſel look'd, nor talked big,
Nor hid his hair beneath a wig,
  On *Wiſdom* be not witt ;
His ſilver locks, and reverend beard,
So like to *Wiſdom's* ſelf appear'd,
  To hide them had been pity.

His briefs were borne by *Rectitude*,
Whom *Wiſdom* largely had endu'd
  With wealth, from his own treaſures ;
Took his advice on all he ſaid,
Purſu'd the paths to which he led,
  And follow'd all his meaſures.

Tho' foremoſt of the ſplendid train,
His garments were exceeding plain,
  Nor fanciful, nor flowing ;
But fitted nicely to his ſhape,
Which ſpoke no faſhionable ape,
  Or aught to faſhion owing.

The next to *Rectitude* was ſeen
A youth of moſt engaging mien,
  The finiſh'd work of Nature—
Peace was his name, his viſage mild,
Of *Rectitude* the firſt-born child,
  Like him in ſhape and feature.

But, whilſt his lineage you might trace
In every captivating grace,
He ſeem'd the prey of ſorrow;
Soft tears upon his cheeks repoſe,
Like dew-drops on the maiden roſe
Ere Sol has ſaid Good morrow!

Yet he, unruffled, ſtill did lend
A willing ear to one kind friend,—
This friend was *Conſolation*,
Who talk'd of future bliſs in ſtore,
Of love renew'd, and many more
Joys of his own creation;

Much ſoothing fondneſs did diſplay,
And would have wip'd thoſe drops away,
That bitter were and galling:
His voice ſo mild, ſo ſweet his look,
That weeping *Peace* ſome comfort took,
But ſtill his tears kept falling.

On the moiſt earth his tears were ſown,
His arms were croſs'd, his colour flown,
A victim of diſpleaſure;
Th' envelop'd *Myſtery* chain'd his eyes,
Theſe words were uſher'd in with ſighs;
"There ſleeps my murder'd treaſure!"

Permit

Permit that I, to aid my ſkill,
Should now the vacant canvaſs fill
With leaders of the faſhion,
The *Siſters'* houſehold, and their friends,
Whoſe life or converſation tends
To ſpread abroad detraction.

Both rank and file, the houſehold troops,
Who heard the cries, the yells, the whoops,
So loud and ſo alarming,
Burſt from their dreary cells below,
To aid their ladies ſeldom ſlow,
And all the way were arming.

Audacity march'd on in front,
Not *Honour's* ſelf could ever daunt
A brazen fiend ſo daring;
To her clung *Fear*, as moſt ſecure,
But kept aloof, without the door,
And like a fool ſtood ſtaring.

Shame limp'd a little way behind,
Groping about ſome hole to find,
Where ſhe might hide her bluſhes;
Now here, now there, with downcaſt eyes,
With ſearching glances keenly ſpies,
But ſaw nor trees nor buſhes.

The colours hoiſted on her cheek
Did more of dread than boldneſs ſpeak,
To *Modeſty* ſhe ſtruck them;
The victor cheer'd her vanquiſh'd foe,
And, gently checking, let her go;
She us'd no force to pluck them.

In deeds of proweſs none could vie
With never-wearied *Calumny*,
So ſwift on foot, ſo ready,
That ſhowers of poiſon'd arrows fall
On age, on youth, on great, on ſmall,
Few miſs a mark ſo ſteady:

Tho' menial, ſhe was *Falſehood's* friend,
Ready at all times to attend
And help her, if requir'd—
Coax *Forgery* to ſign his hand,
And *Perjury* never made a ſtand
To do what ſhe deſir'd.

Deceit with varniſh'd ſkin came next,
Seem'd penſive, and a little vex'd,
Now hear what had offended;
As praying in the face of Sin,
Intrigue, and *Flattery*, both came in
Before her prayers were ended.

What

What are you at? they bellow'd out:
We're loſt—undone—Hark! what a ſhout!
Honour our walls environ!
Arm'd with her maſk, away ſhe ran,
Intrigue us'd nothing but a fan;
Flattery a ſmoothing iron.

Folly, with lolling tongue, ſtood by,
Fixing her luſtre-lacking eye
On *Miſchief*, whom ſhe cheriſh'd;
By private ties ſhe was his bride,
And as for all the world beſide,
She car'd not if they periſh'd.

Her ſhoes were ſlipp'd, her gown was worn,
Her ſkin was foul, her pinners torn,
Yet *Miſchief* ſeem'd to like her;
Near her he paſs'd the live-long day,
With kitten's love, would ſcratch, or play,
Now kiſs, and now would ſtrike her.

Her apron was not over ſtrong,
In many a hole and tatter hung,
Unfitted for retention;
And yet they manag'd ſo like fools,
That it receiv'd all *Miſchief's* tools,
Sharp edg'd, or of invention.

The

The conſequence is plain to tell,
No ſooner in, than out they fell,
As fire thro' paper paſſes;
The idiots toſs'd them to and fro,
Now in are hurl'd, now out they go,
Incorrigible aſſes!

Theſe words were mutter'd by *Diſgrace*,
Who follow'd with no tardy pace,
All birds of his own feather;
He ſwore he would not quit their ſide,
Till they ſome wiſer means had try'd
To keep their tools together.

Hard at their heels, to cloſe the rear,
March'd gloomy, hollow-ey'd *Deſpair*,
Pale effigy of ſadneſs;
At his bare breaſt a ſerpent hung,
Whoſe deadly venom round he flung,
In ecſtaſy of madneſs!

Here paus'd my Muſe—ſilent her lyre—
Her eyes emitted paler fire,
She ſnatch'd her verſe and tore it;
Serious and awful now her look,
Again the inſtrument ſhe took,
And ſwept her fingers o'er it.

I aſk'd

I aſk'd the cauſe: ſhe ſaw me ſmile:
I hate, ſaid ſhe, the flippant ſtyle
In which I have been ſporting;
To ſuit the tones of *Wiſdom's* voice,
More ſolid verſe ſhall be my choice,
Whilſt *Honour's* wrongs reporting.—

Serene in majeſty, the holy dame,
Led by the bluſhing Virtues, onward came;
Her ſteady eyes no objects diſcompoſe,
Tho' blaſted by the deadlieſt of her foes:
Hiſſing, they would have puſh'd her from the door,
But *Honour's* feet, tho' ſlow, are always ſure;
Safely they bore her thro' the clamorous crew,
Who ſhew'd leſs fury, as ſhe bolder grew;
With ſov'reign contempt ſhe mark'd the crowd,
The ſhapeleſs ſomething kiſs'd—to *Juſtice* bow'd;
Before, ſaid ſhe, this *myſt'ry* I reveal,
To *Wiſdom*—and to you, I dare appeal——
More ſtern ſhe frown'd — and wav'd her ſun-
crown'd head,
Whoſe radiant beams were round the circle ſpread;
Leſs dreadful to the clan eternal gloom,
Too weak their ſight for this illumin'd room;
They ſkulk about, as reptiles fly from day,
Who but in darkneſs hunt their ſleeping prey.
Vain were their efforts to eſcape the light,
They fly—but, flying, ſtumble in their flight.

Well

Well might they ſtumble—*Folly* for their guide,
Impeded too by all their ſins beſide;
And well might *Time*, who never look'd ſo gay
As when in *Honour's* ſuit—tho' bent—and grey,
Find ſtrength ſufficient, as the traitors fall,
Their ſlaviſh limbs in bondage to enthrall.
The hoſts of *Honour* gather'd round her throne,
Byſylphs immortal rais'd of jaſper ſtone;
Here the *envelop'd ſprights* hung round her knees,
As round the ſweeteſt flow'rs hang honey'd-bees.
Above them, *Juſtice* ſat——ſtern was his brow,
The heav'n-born congreſs all before him bow.
Unconſcious of their homage, he remains
To worſhip blind, and deaf to partial ſtrains;
His ſword unſheath'd, to *Mercy's* hand he gave,
Loth to deſtroy, where *Mercy's* ſelf could ſave.
Through *Mercy's* eyes, foul deeds he would review,
And where he could not pardon, only ſlew!
But crimes there are, of ſuch infernal dye,
As *Mercy* cannot ſee with pity's eye;
Some ſuch did in their arms *Falſehood* ſuſtain,
And many more diſtinguiſh'd *Envy's* train;
Others, and not a few, of rank there were,
Who loving all, did yet to one adhere;
Malice, as *Envy*, and as *Falſehood*, ſtood,
Surrounded by a guard of their own brood;

With

With writhing ſpite their heavy chains they bore,
And venom drops diſtill'd from every pore;
Honour convey'd on them a ſtill rebuke,
That ſpar'd not commoner, nor lord, nor duke.
Tho' ſtill, it language had; to each it ſaid,
Is it by you that *Honour* is betray'd?
You, who have dar'd to call yourſelf my ſon!
Is it by you that *Honour* is undone?
Her fond maternal boſom doom'd to feel
The piercing anguiſh of your hidden ſteel?
Oh! ſacred *Juſtice*, 'tis on thee I call:
Theſe ſons of rapine! I renounce them all!
Wiſdom ſtood up—Erect his manly form,
His viſage, like the ocean free from ſtorm,
Calm—undiſturb'd—the culprits he ſurvey'd,
One hand he upwards held, and one diſplay'd
Towards the guilty priſoners at the bar,
To judgment brought—alas! from Heaven how far!
When *Honour* look'd, and *Wiſdom* roſe to ſpeak,
The female friends of *Envy* backwards ſneak!
Silence cry'd hiſt! as *Wiſdom's* lips divide,
From whence flow'd eloquence as flows the tide,
Not like to mortal phraſe, or mortal wit,
Divine was on his words and geſtures writ;

Divine

Divine his voice! his impulſes divine!
Divinity was mark'd on every line!
To *Envy* firſt, who hung her baneful head,
He thus addreſs'd his ſpeech, and calmly ſaid:
Oh! thou, who doſt thy neighbours' goods deſpoil,
And fatten on the profits of their toil!
Thou, who doſt ſicken at another's fame,
And look on other's glory as thy ſhame!
Thou, who doſt ſtand in corners dark, and gloom,
To ſnatch from Virtue's wreath its fragrant bloom—
To plant deformity where beauty grows,
And overwhelm with weed the taintleſs roſe!
Attend my voice, for thy defence prepare,
'Tis mine, the ſpoiler, as the ſpoil'd to hear.
The pris'ner pert and peeviſhly reply'd,
Demanding by her peers ſhe might be try'd;
Her friends, ſhe ſaid, with whom ſhe long had liv'd
In friendſhip's habits, ſure muſt be believ'd?
Many were preſent, many more unſeen,
That if he meddled, would ſtep in between;
Would ſpeak to her good name as to their own,
And whoſe importance pretty well was known!
As to his cenſure, it was all a joke.
Wiſdom turn'd from her, and to *Malice* ſpoke:
An equal likeneſs in thy ſoul I trace,
A ſemblance ſtrong to *Envy* in thy face;

Like

Like her, I know, thou boldly wilt diſown
The awful Ruler that commands me down;
Supreme in juſtice, as in love ſupreme!
By *Wiſdom's* voice he would your ſouls redeem;
His love can heal, or juſtice point the dart,
Who kiſſes not the rod ſhall rue the ſmart!
Chiefly to thee, malignant foe, I'm ſent,
To ſeal thy pardon, or thy puniſhment:
'Gainſt thee has *Honour* lifted up her eyes;
'Gainſt thee has utter'd loud and piteous cries!
Her wrongs and her complaints have pierc'd that veil,
Which does from ſight Omnipotence conceal!
If thou doſt hear my voice, and ceaſe to ſpread
Thy fabricated nets for Virtue laid,
Leave off thy fruitleſs efforts to o'erthrow
The perfect ſteps of Innocence below;
To ravage and lay waſte, depreſs, betray!
So thy offences ſhall be done away.
But tremble for that vengeance which attends
Who of malicious, wickedneſs offends!—
Malice look'd round, and anſwer'd with a ſneer,
Shall I, ſupported thus, ſubmit to fear?
A glance met hers from every female eye,
Impregnated with deareſt ſympathy:
Silent, but ſtrong, it ſanction'd her conceit—
Who fights for *Malice*, never will retreat!

In

In vain was *Wiſdom's* eloquence diſplay'd;
To batter *Falſehood*'s front, he next eſſay'd —
Infernal *Falſehood*, ſmiling miſchief fair!
Thy heart deform'd, thy language inſincere,
Long with thy *Siſters* haſt thou been combin'd
To injure *Honour*, and enſlave mankind:
Who after *Envy*, *Malice*, *Falſehood* run
To ruin others, are themſelves undone!
Thouſands on thouſands are by thoſe miſled,
And fill the net themſelves for others ſpread:
To ſuffering Virtue, ſay, wilt thou reſtore
The treaſure thou haſt ſtolen, and ſin no more?
The ſword of *Juſtice* hangs above thy head!
Doſt thou ſay Guilty, or, Not guilty plead?
Some Nobles of the realm now forward ſtood,
Endear'd to *Falſehood* more by choice, than blood,
And ere the quick-forg'd lie had from her tongue
Eſcap'd, the bliſter'd lips on which it hung,
Anticipating what ſhe would have ſaid,
Not guilty! cry'd—then turn'd their backs and fled—
Not guilty! echo'd in a cringing ſtrain,
Each dirty link that great to little chain;
Wiſdom re-echoes back the partial ſound,
Repeats, Not guilty! with an air profound—
Not guilty, Lords!—Not guilty, ſirs! he cries,
Reproach ſtood ſtation'd in his voice, and eyes—

To Heav'n your evidence we ſhall tranſmit,
Heav'n muſt approve! or you in vain acquit;
Your evidence muſt paſs that high ordeal,
From whoſe deciſion there is no appeal;
Juſtice will make a faithful, true report,
And ſend up minutes from his awful court.
See where he ſits array'd in Heav'n's own ſtate,
To execute his will, whoſe will is Fate!
Let now the injur'd party forward ſtand,
Rehearſe her wrongs, fearleſs her rights demand!
Such were his words, his graces who can tell?
Wiſdom himſelf did his own grace excel.
So *Honour* thought, and riſing from her throne,
Obedience paid to him, and him alone;
Next on *Religion* fix'd her ſteady eye,
To *Juſtice* then look'd up, and heav'd a ſigh!
From all but them, unſtudious of applauſe,
She, as commanded, open'd thus her cauſe:—
The glare of Vice I ſhun, yet love broad day;
My ſteps are lonely, private is my way;
Content with *Fortitude* my ſpouſe to dwell,
Whether it be in palace, houſe, or cell;
At preſent we inhabit, 'tis our lot,
A pleaſant, homely, unfrequented cot;
One path to Fame leads travellers by my door,
Lovely, and ſafe, but few that path explore;

The

The multitude a ſhorter cut have found,
Attaining which, they treſpaſs on my ground;
In vain I point the finger out to ſhew
Which leads to Happineſs, and which to Woe:
Onwards they ruſh, regardleſs of the ill,
By Pleaſure cheer'd, and captives to Self-will;
With theſe your priſoners, by your pow'rs reſtrain'd,
From friendſhip and from commerce I refrain'd;
With impious mirth my dictates they deride,
With impious ſcorn from *Honour* turn aſide:
A thouſand outrages I could repeat,
But reſt we now on that for which we meet.
This *Myſtery*, my Lords—again ſhe ſigh'd,
The ſhapeleſs ſpectre with affection ey'd—
This *Myſtery*, my Lords, muſt be unveil'd,
Heaven can diſcloſe it—human ſtrength has fail'd!
Beneath this covering, this cloth of fear,
Entomb'd is *Innocence!* more ſweet, more fair,
Than loathſome foul, the caſe that does enſhrine
The ſacred maid, half mortal, half divine!
Prudence, my ſiſter, gave the darling birth,
Earth-born her father, and return'd to earth!
Rock'd in my arms, the artleſs infant grew
In ſoul celeſtial, beauteous to the view;
With dutiful adherence ſhe repaid
My tender love, and all my laws obey'd;

Of this adopted child, ſo fondly rear'd,
Alike to *Fortitude* as me endear'd,
Our youngeſt offspring *Peace*——ſee where he ſtands,
Weeping her loſs, and wringing his ſoft hands!
Ordained huſband, ſo we had decreed,
For all that was immortal of the maid,
Union of ſouls, a marriage ſanctified,
Which nought but witchcraft could have ſet aſide!
Her lovely form, ſubject to mortal harms,
To ſickneſs, death, and unforeſeen alarms,
Aſk'd mortal ſhelter from the ſtorms of life,
A huſband worthy of ſo ſweet a wife—
A huſband, friend, and lover, all in one,
Who, loving her, would love but her alone:—
Such be the man, I pray'd, and pray'd intenſe,
Who weds the human form of *Innocence!*—
When lower'd to earth, with *Prudence* for her guide,
I bade *Experience* not to quit their ſide,
A faithful ſervant, in my ſervice bred,
Of penetration ſcarce to be miſled!
Beſides theſe guardians—I their ways did ſpy,
And watch'd their progreſs with a jealous eye;
Saw with delight how *Innocence* did go,
How her chaſte influence brighten'd all below.
Mean time, to cheat the ſand that heavy ran
Of irkſome ſeparation, I began

A nuptial garb to weave for her fair frame,
And gave it *Reputation* for its name;
Fine the materials, of tranſcendent white,
The gloſs ſuperior, durable as bright.
This pleaſing taſk perform'd, with anxious care
The curious web upon my breaſt I wear,
Not more to keep it out of *Envy's* way,
And ſave it from becoming *Falſehood's* prey,
Than to preſerve it from the tainting air
That *Malice* breathes on all that's good or fair.
The work completed, and the hours beguil'd,
I look'd, and long'd, for my adopted child;
Peace, ſmiling, prattled of his little wife,
And watch'd with me, her graceful ſteps through life;
Saw in the maze of *Diſſipation's* walk,
With *Prudence* and *Experience* ſhe did talk;
Heard her in gentle ſtrains their counſel ſeek,
Saw on their boſoms ſhe reclin'd her cheek.
Charms mortal and immortal ſo combin'd,
So ſtrongly knit, were ſca ce to be defin'd.
Peace ſaw his deſtin'd bride, without alarms,
Courted to take a rival to her arms;
No ſelfiſh fears, no paſſionate diſguſt,
Deform'd the ſoul of *Peace*, all there was huſh'd.
A human rival—his was love divine,
Oh! be, he cry'd, his love as pure as mine!

And *Peace* ſhall bleſs him to his lateſt breath,
My ties with *Innocence* commence in death;
Beyond the grave all rivals I ſubdue,
There will our joys be ever firm and new,
Through realms of bliſs, as wand'ring ſide by ſide,
No *fiend* ſhall *Peace* and *Innocence* divide!
Here *Honour* paus'd—and with a dying look
Deep groan'd, as health her blooming cheeks forſook;
Strong feelings from her vitals turn'd the flood,
Back forc'd the torrent of her ſanguine blood,
Whilſt phœnix-like, in her own flame ſhe glows,
A brighter phœnix from her efforts roſe;
Her eyes expreſs re-animated fires,
Her voice new tones, new energy acquires;
Behold! ſhe ſaid, her viſion caſt on high,
As if to call down thunder from the ſky—
Behold, oh Thou! Omnipotent, Supreme!
In whom all live, all move, and have their being!
From whom nor good nor evil is obſcur'd,
By evil dreaded, by the good ador'd,
Behold my conflicts! be my fortreſs ſtill,
To thy unerring wiſdom bend my will!
But for thy ready help, my ſtrength had fail'd,
As I the wrongs of *Innocence* reveal'd;
Such wrongs, I know, thy judgment will purſue,
And all her blaſted charms with life renew!—

The hand of *Peace* ſhe ſeiz'd, as thus ſhe pray'd,
And drew him nearer to the ſpell-bound maid,
Who, tho' by magic hid, and wrapt in ſhame,
Shewed vibration as he cloſer came.
Honour of *Juſtice* patience did invoke,
And thus re-knit the charge her grief had broke:
Beſides that *Envy*, in the broad of day,
Contriv'd to ſteal my precious web away,
Andaf ter with her *Siſters* did depart,
Bearing their ſpoil—how conjur'd from my heart,
By arts inviſible, to me unknown,
Let *Juſtice* aſk—and let the culprits own!
Beſides this theft of which I now complain,
Obſerve theſe reptiles who compoſe the train
Of *Envy's* ſuite, and bow to *Malice* down,
Pay court to *Falſehood*, and on *Merit* frown!
They carv'd for *Innocence* ſo hard a fate,
As they alone unfeeling could relate.
Leſs harden'd ſouls with penitential dew
Had waſh'd away the ſtains their malice threw!
My charge ends here—let *Prudence* now report
Before this high, this Heav'n-appointed Court,
And let *Experience* join her evidence,
To prove what harms are done to *Innocence*.
She ſaid, then ſilent heard the juſt command;
Prudence advanc'd, ſuſtain'd by *Truth's* fair hand.

But

But ere ſhe ſpeaks, halt! and with patience view,
What tricks were practis'd by the daſtard crew;
The burning torch which *Obſervation* held,
From whoſe detecting light could be conceal'd
Nor word nor action, that did tend to ſhed
Deſtruction on the unprotected head
Of *Innocence*; nothing eſcap'd unſeen
By *Obſervation* ſtrong, of viſion keen;
He ſaw when *Honour* did her charge unfold,
The *Reputation* ſtolen, lamenting told;
He ſaw lean *Envy* privately convey
From hand to hand the web ſo ſtolen away,
From fair to fair, all anxious to conceal
Another's crime, which muſt their own reveal;
Pupils of *Malice*, ſlaves to *Envy* bred,
Handmaids to *Falſehood*, by her dictates led;
This truth they ſtrongly felt, that ſhame attends
Not only *Vice* itſelf, but *Vice's* friends.
Silence on *Obſervation* forced his laws;
He too had mark'd their motions, ſaw the cauſe
Of all their ſhuffling tricks, their guilty fears,
But, ſeeing all things, uninform'd appears.
His eyes purſu'd the web, his open ear
To *Prudence* turn'd, whoſe accents, mild and clear,
Pleas'd all they touch'd—But Faſhion's motley crew,
A ſhow'r of mocking taunts round *Prudence* threw.

She ſaid with ſteady voice and modeſt mien,
Honour, my ſiſter, and moſt gracious queen,
Ordain'd, that I with *Innocence* come down,
From higher regions to this favour'd town,
Meaning, my daughter being young and fair,
If well receiv'd, ſhould be eſtabliſh'd here.
Her father, reſt his aſhes, he is gone!
Two parents once ſhe had!—now has but one!
Alas! her feeble ſweetneſs could I guard!
The taſk I undertook; but ſure too hard
For me it was, who am ſo little known,
And leſs belov'd by thoſe to pleaſure prone!
Through roſeate paths the artleſs maid I led,
No ſtep without me did ſhe ever tread.
Her beauteous form at firſt delights them all,
Praiſes and benedictions round her fall.
To dreſs, to look like her, the females try,
And mock the language of her tongue and eye;
To copy outward charms, oh! how intenſe!
Unmark'd, th' internal grace of *Innocence!*
Had they her gentle nature made their own,
Like her, had ſympathy or pity known;
Their machinations had not croſs'd her way—
Who learn her dictates, never can betray!
White was her robe, and lily white her hand,
Not, like her foes, in ſemblance only bland!

Their

Their hands, their hearts unclean, for miſchief ripe,
Yellow their hue, of jealouſy the type;
Friendſhip they utter'd loud, but whiſper'd hate,
Call'd her divine! but gave her mortal fate!
To make their garb like hers; in vain they toil,
And what they could not rival, try'd to ſpoil.
It happ'd, in conſequence of this decree,
As *Innocence* walk'd on upheld by me,
That on her veſtment drops of poiſon fell,
But from what quarter ſhe nor I could tell;
Of ink the colour, tho' it left no ſtain,
Touching the garment hem, off dropp'd again.
With anxious doubts the preſage I ſurvey'd,
And ſaw with ſorrow *Innocence* diſmay'd.
Experience ſhook her head, bade us beware,
And ſaid, each ſmiling face conceal'd a ſnare.
No face there was but ſmil'd on *Innocence*,
Yet not one hand was rais'd in her defence;
When magic ſpells the hapleſs victim bound,
And laid her ſpeechleſs on the hard cold ground!
What could *Experience* do?—Againſt thoſe harms
That Sorcery invents, ſhe has no charms!
Deform'd as now you ſee, wrapp'd up in fear,
To *Honour* we convey'd the ſtricken deer:
In *Honour's* arms we felt returning heat,
Felt through the ſackcloth her ſlow pulſes beat;

Honour

Honour exerted all her ſkill, and try'd
The victim from the witchcraft to divide;
But try'd in vain—no ſkill nor ſtrength would do—
Heav'n's aid to ſupplicate, to Heav'n ſhe flew:
My ſuffering ſpell-bound child ſhe left behind,
On *Fortitude* the mis-ſhap'd form reclin'd.
Religion's voice ſhe heard; it pierc'd her ear,
But the ſweet tones of *Peace* ſhe could not hear!
Now *Prudence* cloſed her evidence—and ſigh'd,
Whilſt many a cheek in conſcious red was dy'd;
Wiſdom appear'd wrapp'd up in thought profound,
He paus'd—then caſt detecting glances round—
Saw *Malice* mute—ſaw *Envy* melancholy—
He mark'd them all, but chiefly notic'd *Folly*;
Whoſe quirks and tricks, whoſe uncontroul'd grimace,
Idiot importance, vacant,, grinning face,
Spoke her in office, and the confidence,
Of thoſe who tortur'd injur'd *Innocence*;
Then call'd her to the bar; where ſhe betray'd
Whatever *Malice* did, or *Envy* ſaid,
Which mark'd a page of crimes, ſo dark, ſo deep,
That tho' by *Folly* blazon'd, ſome did weep;
All that to *Innocence* were aught allied,
Her foes grew pale, and turn'd their heads aſide,
As feeling ſhame, altho' to boldneſs prone,
Not for their crimes—but that their crimes were known.

No longer *Juſtice* could his wrath command,
He ſnatch'd the ſword from *Mercy's* trembling hand:
But ere it fell, tremendous thunders roll,
And forked lightning flaſh'd from pole to pole.
Awe-ſtricken! *Juſtice* liſten'd to the ſound,
Then cry'd, 'Tis done! be *Innocence* unbound!
Be all her griefs, her ſuff'rings hence forgot!
He ſaid, and cut in two th' enchanted knot;
From hands profane the pilfer'd web he drew,
And round cold *Innocence* the mantle threw;
'Tis done! ariſe! renew'd are all thy charms!
Bluſhing ſhe roſe, and ruſh'd to *Honour's* arms!
From *Honour's* arms, *Peace* caught her to his heart,
And ſmiling cry'd, Henceforth we never part!

THE END.

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